

# The Tasmanian Trail

Devonport to Dover - in two parts!



## Horsing Around in the Apple Isle!

Well not quite – but we *were* following, so to speak, in the horses' hooves! We *walked* the 480-plus kilometres (and it *was* plus for us) of the Tasmanian Trail!

Why did we choose the Tasmanian Trail and not a series of the more wilderness-oriented tracks in Tassie? Well, to be frank, it was kind of an

accident. I wanted a break from boat – a holiday so to speak. We had had a tragic start to 2020 before, like everybody else on the Planet, we were caught up physically and emotionally with Covid. This meant, by



Targeting Tassie

Why Tasmania?

Page 1

Part 1

Devonport to Lachlan

Page 9

Part 2

Lachlan to Dover

Page 61

default, there was a lot of sticking around the one area, and when we did move we got stuck a lot of the time with weather. When we get stuck with weather we don't get a lot of opportunity to get off boat and exercise. And even if we can get off boat we don't (usually) get access to many 'official walking tracks', so we have to make up our own. I wanted something different. I wanted a walking holiday! Andrew wanted somewhere cooler than where we were. Tasmania was the answer.

I had originally started to look at the 'normal' walking alternatives in Tassie. We have walked the Overland Track (guided), walked some of Walls of Jerusalem National Park (on our own), and explored the North West of the State by 4WD. This time around we wondered whether we should just base ourselves out of, or around, Hobart, and spend the time exploring nearby national parks, or maybe look at the area around the Bay of Fires in the North East of the State? Or perhaps 'the mid East coast and across to the Freychinet Peninsula? We have done the 11-kilometer circuit from the Visitors Center there but not the multi-day walk. It was therefore a bit of a surprise to come across the Tasmanian Trail – a trail we had not heard of before - but why would we? We don't ride horses!

The Tasmanian Trail (from Devonport to Dover) started as the Tasmanian option/extension after the development of the Bicentennial Trail on the Australian mainland – a long distance self-reliant 'horse trail' from Cooktown, Queensland to Healesville, Victoria. Admittedly, we had considered walking sections of the Bicentennial Trail, but before we could look at logistics – food drops needed etc – we dismissed it, because the easiest State to access the trail for us (given where we've been for the past couple of years) would be Queensland – and that was exactly the State we wanted to get away from.

So having discovered the Tasmanian Trail we came to the conclusion it would tick a few boxes: it was in Tassie, so satisfied Andrew's preferred location; it was going to be a challenge in logistics practice, because of its distance; and the fact that a majority of the trail is road-walking, we could use it as a warm up for *Te Araroa* in New Zealand. This 'little' exercise would also help us work out whether we would *actually enjoy* walking long distance trails.

Tasmania is not quite the green wilderness oasis that it was marketed as in the 1990s. But we knew that. And traveling through the state we 'kinda got the feeling' that most of the State is one big, revolving, resource. Of course that is a

metaphoric guess, and there are great swathes of the green and protected areas on the maps, including quite a bit marked as World Heritage. And Forests do indeed dot the landscape though the middle of the state – each at various ages, stages and sizes; from recently flattened logging coups to swathes of bush with giant trees with giant trunks indicating some age. Of course we were following a horse trail; we weren't walking in wilderness areas, and any bush we saw was along public access State Forest, Forestry Tasmania or Hydro Tasmania land and so tied to the government resource. Any patches of thick or rain-forestry bush were a delight to the eye – but we had to wonder; were these patches of tree ferns and cooler habitat species left for a purpose, or just in pockets where the logging machinery couldn't access? Whilst the answer might be 'both,' it is probably skewed to the latter.

So why walk a horse trail? The trail was set up for horses. The Tasmanian Trail is now being promoted as the only 'long-distance multi-use trail' in Tasmania and is being marketed to cyclists and walkers as well. It works well for cyclists; they can travel even further than horses each day. For walkers such as us however, it has one glaring issue – a lack of camping

spots in the middle of long stages. This is only criticism we have; the committee has on the whole has done a wonderful job at coordinating all the stakeholders and maintaining the Trail.

### Accommodation.

At the end of each stage in the Tasmanian Trail Guide, a campsite is listed with a paddock for horses, or listed facilities where horses can be housed. Because they can travel further than horses each day, cyclists are likely take to accommodation options along the way. But of course hikers don't travel quite so quickly. We chatted to one group of cyclists who had travelled 90 kilometres in one day! And there were the four Queensland boys, who wheeled-in for a chat after we left Judbury. They had only spent one night sleeping rough and would be in Geeveston for lunch in two hours time, and be finished with the Trail in Dover that afternoon. We, on the other hand, would be in Geeveston late that evening, and not finish the Trail for another two days!

We took accommodation options where we could, splitting the official stages into two where necessary, and where we were able; but it was not always possible. Our accommodation ranged in type; we mainly took 'hotel rooms' and 'Bed and Breakfasts,' but also booked 'self contained cottages' if that was all that was available. Some of these locations we would go back to in a shot, some we would avoid. All however served their purpose at the time – a welcome roof over our heads, no matter how small or old, was much preferable than being in a tent in cold or wet conditions.

### Recommended Accommodation:

Sheffield: [Tanglewood](#) (B&B)

Weegen: [Elvenhome](#) (S/C)

Bronte Park: [Highland Cabins and Cottages](#) (S/C)

Fentonbury: [Hamlet Downs](#) (B&B)

New Norfolk: [Shingles Riverside Cottages](#) (S/C)

New Norfolk: [Explorers Lodge](#)

Geeveston: [Cambridge House](#) (B&B)

Dover: [Castaway Cottage](#) (S/C)

Dover: [Ashdowns of Dover](#) (B&B)

### Hospitality

The Tasmanian people on a whole are a friendly and helpful bunch. Even if accommodation places couldn't help us, proprietors were often helpful in suggesting alternatives. Over our time in Tassie, I only had one bad (grumpy) encounter with a tourism provider – which is a positive endorsement of everyone else.

### Timing.

We had chosen February because we would miss the summer school holidays, although the actual start date was, ironically, dependent on when we could get Sengo in storage. Sengo has a wide beam and there are only centimeters to spare when she is lifted out of the water on the 100 tonne travel lift. Because of this she is listed as a 'high tide lift' at the boat yard. In order to hedge our bets with calm winds, an early morning lift is preferred. To get high tide early in the morning we had to wait until the 8<sup>th</sup> February. I had planned the walk would take about a month – starting on the 11<sup>th</sup> February and finishing on the 12<sup>th</sup> March. This timeline included five 'zero days'; three full days break in Miena and two full days break in New Norfolk. Things didn't quite work out as planned, and we finished on the 4<sup>th</sup> April (Easter Sunday, and back into the next lot of school holidays!); the enforced break in the middle due to me getting shin splints in the right leg (a very painful condition added to by the fact I ripped a thick section of skin off the bottom of the same foot) and then the recovery time needed before a commercially booked walking tour. It was only after the walking tour on Bruny Island that we went back to finishing the Trail.



## Photos

I normally take a lot of photos – which I admit I am very bad at organizing afterward. I would not have time to take copious amounts of photographs on this trip and wondered how I was going to manage this. We had seen one *Te Araroa* blogger who specifically took a 10am photo (amongst others). This was an appealing idea and we noticed another blogger had copied it, taking his daily shot at 11am, plus others. I thought I would have a go at taking an hourly shot – if I remembered – I wasn't going to put an alarm on my phone. I did take other photos but not many, as I was concentrating on the travel. As a result some of the very scenic views are memories in our minds and not recorded digitally.

when we got to Hobart. As it turns out *Find Your Feet*, an outdoor store in Elizabeth Street, Hobart, did carry a small range of Radix Nutrition. 'Back County' is stocked by all four outdoor shops we went to in central Hobart but is not the healthiest option (most varieties contain wheat and sugar, and in my case have the allergens of potato, corn and capsicum as well). The local brands of *Strive* and *Campers Pantry* don't help. There are not yet any useful gluten free options for *Strive* (although apparently working on them) and *Campers Pantry* made up meals are a problem for various reasons. Their singular ingredient packets would have been fine if I had had the time, or the headspace, to work out my own recipes before we started.

However, the committee is still very horse-oriented and is just coming around to the issues of 'slow' bipedal travel; they have had a few runners doing the Trail of late apparently, but runners travel quite differently to hikers. The Tasmanian Trail Association Facebook Page has details of these travels, I am told. We aren't on Facebook so don't have access to that information, however, any updates pertinent to the Trail are published on the website as well as the Facebook page as they become current. It is vital that the updates are checked throughout the trek as sometime tracks are no longer accessible, and alternatives must be taken. I checked every couple of days when I got reception; fortunately there were no updates that affected us.

## Food

Don't expect to find anything healthy in the back blocks of Tassie! For the hike, where we needed to have food, we carried freeze-dried and processed meals that I was *relatively* (but not perfectly) happy with, given the circumstances; the main brands being 'Radix Nutrition' and 'Wild Zora'. But I organized it all from Queensland (stretching our weight limit on the plane) because I couldn't guarantee access to the food I wanted

## The Tasmanian Trail Association

Over the course of the past few months we have been in contact with several of the Tasmanian Trail Association committee members. They are rightly proud of their Trail and are receptive to comments and suggestions from participants along the track. With the need to register and update your progress, they also keep a vague eye on who is out there.

Whilst our trip to Tasmania was mostly about our Tasmanian Trail trek, it did include other activities. The plan was to walk the 'Trail, have a bit of a break, attend the *Bruny Island Long Weekend* and then fly back to Queensland. The eventual schedule saw the Trail done in two tranches, with two lots of exploring with the car, as well as our Bruny Island escape. This document is written as diary notes as per my normal Aboard Sengo notes; distances noted are approximate.



## The Tasmanian Trail – February to April 2021

### Queensland to Tasmania: Heading South

9th February 2021. We were up at 0359, a minute before the alarm went off. Our first task was a yoga session to limbre up our bodies – we would be sitting for quite some time today. We were downstairs, and outside ready to be picked up at 0445. There had been some confusion at the front desk yesterday when we had checked into the hotel, and I surmised it was possible that two taxis from different companies were going to turn up to pick us up. We don't know if a second appeared – we took the first. There was also a bit of confusion as to the cost of the taxi. In a normal year the hotel has a courtesy bus but because of Covid that service was no longer available. That's okay, we were assured, the taxi fare was a fixed \$23.00. A pity they didn't tell the driver – he only confirming this after a call to his base. The queues for check-in at the airport were long, and we were directed to drop our bags at the Virgin counter because the length of the Jetstar queue was excessive. We did this after self-checking our gear, helped by an attendant. Clearly it has been a long time since I've done this as my labeling of my bags was all wrong; I didn't keep the tag numbers and I just hoped the baggage didn't get lost in transit.

Breakfast options at the airport were few. There was only a couple of food outlets open in Brisbane Airport at that time of the morning but we managed to find something I could eat without too many hassles.

Entry to the plane was via the tarmac and the back steps. I am not sure if that was because of the size of the plane or due to Covid. Either way, all went well and the plane took off on time. At Brisbane Airport, according to the pilot, it was a balmy 22.6 degrees Celsius - but it was at that time, currently 10 degrees in Hobart. Brr! Hobart was expecting a top of 20 and it was 14.7 degrees when we actually landed. Our Flight had apparently flown a bit lower than normal to avoid turbulence. And it had been pushing into a head wind. I didn't notice as I slept some of way; I was surprised my neck was not worse than it was. We were also thankful that two babies on board had only screamed a couple of minutes before landing, I don't want to imagine what the flight would have been like if they had screamed for the entire trip! The descent into Hobart was though thick white cotton ball cloud. (I would have taken photos except both the camera and the phone were in my backpack in the overhead



locker, and as I was in the window seat it was a bit difficult to get to them)

It felt cold when we got out. Andrew had hedged against this and was wearing long trousers. I had three quarter length pants on and felt the change in temperature a bit more. The Covid queue to get into the airport building took only 10 minutes, which we found surprising...we had been told to expect longer. Retrieving our bags we headed outside to find the Skybus. After buying the tickets however, we found we had 20 minutes to wait for departure – so went back into the terminal building for cuppa. We ended up with a cold drink instead, and Andrew had a quick second breakfast. We chatted to a couple doing the Three Capes Walk, and continued that conversation with them on the bus.

The Skybus stops opposite the RACV Hobart Hotel on Collins Street so we didn't have far to haul our excessive luggage, and once we got to the room we

took a big breath before the afternoon rush.

### The afternoon rush

I had arranged a Woolies Online order to get delivered to the hotel, and to make sure we had it, I got it delivered on the 8<sup>th</sup> February. The order was for our 'scroggin' ingredients for the trip and now my job was to decant it all into day bags.

And whilst I did scroggin bags Andrew went off to find chocolate and cooking gas. The chocolate was for the scroggin so I couldn't seal the bags up before he returned. I had sent him to find the best chocolate that he could get and was delighted when he returned with some of 85pc cocoa solids; a little bitter but better for you. After that was all packed and put away it was now time to sort the rest of the food; separate the meals to get sent ahead, and decant the rest of our food for the first section of the walk. Freeze-dried food was our mainstay, and the manufacturers make it so you can pour hot water to reconstitute it straight into their packaging. But packaging takes up space, and following someone's suggestion on YouTube we now decant all but one of our meals into plastic zip lock bags; lighter in weight *and* easier to pack.

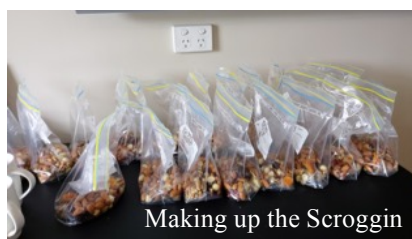
Finally, after ticking off the food, we were down to sorting our clothes and sundries to get

sent to our drop locations. It was around mid afternoon when we finally walked our packs down to the post office (Andrew's full of the stuff for Miena and mine full of the stuff for New Norfolk) and decanted them into one large, and one small box, before mailing them to their respective destinations. I had, of course, prearranged with our accommodation at those places to expect the mail.

In a bit of a panic on a last check of our hiking gear in the hotel room, I couldn't find the sand pegs, so we headed back out and bought some more. We also bought some more gas, as we were told that with Covid and trade issues, there was no gas expected into the state for some months – so if we ran out on the Trail we would be in trouble. Of course this meant we were carrying more weight as we couldn't send the extra gas canisters though the mail!



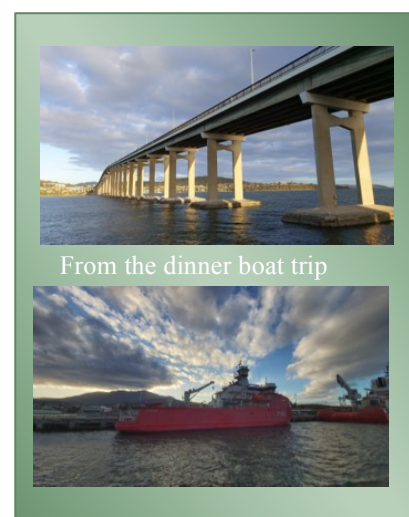
Making up the Scroggin



Making up the Scroggin

Finally, back at the hotel, we cleaned up all the mess in the

room and loaded our backpacks before heading out for dinner. Initially we were walking toward Salamanca Place but ended up on boat trip for our evening meal. Two hours plus with dinner was reasonably priced (the steak was ordinary (should have gone for salmon), but the lemon tart was really good). We got a bit of commentary as well but didn't take much of it in – we were chatting to a NSW couple who had come down for a 'mystery weekend'. The evening back at base was spent, amongst other things, confirming our accommodation with some providers (Covid related), packing up our extra bags for storage, paying for my camera repair in Sydney, and relaxing, before the fun started tomorrow.



From the dinner boat trip

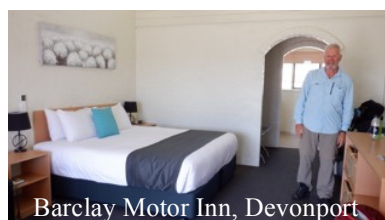




## Heading to the start – North to Devonport

10<sup>th</sup> February 2021. I woke at 0445, got up and made some notes for the diary before going back to bed until 0600. Breakfast was at 0645 at 'Cascade on Collins', the restaurant that belongs to the RACV Hobart Hotel. The doors didn't open as advertised at 0630 as expected and we had to wait a few minutes to be seated. After breakfast, and stowing our gear with reception, we put on, for the first time, our now fully laden packs and walked to the bus depot on Liverpool Street. Because we were early and had half an hour to wait for departure, we left our packs at the depot and walked to Woolies and back, stocking up on Clif bars for the journey, and getting a sturdy bottle of water for both today's journey, and to have extra rations to be placed in the side pockets of our hiking packs. When we finally got on board we found the bus seats were old and slightly uncomfortable, but it did make a difference when I scrunched my fleecy top up behind my back for support. It had been a stressful couple of

days and I managed to nod off for a few moments, but fought against future sleep when I woke up – I didn't want to miss the view. We had a half-hour stop in Launceston and most people on the bus rushed to the café at the bus depot. The only thing the proprietor could feed me was a toastie, as he keeps his gluten free bread in the freezer. It took ages and I was still eating it when we lined up to get back on the bus. The journey from here took us the back roads to Devonport (the old main roads before they put the Bass Highway in), including Deloraine, where we went past a hotel we would be staying at in a few days time. Eventually we arrived in Devonport and after the under-comfortable bus trip that had taken several hours, we insulted our backs further by putting the packs back on and walking to our motel. We ordered breakfast to be delivered to the room tomorrow morning and organised the evening meal at 'Mrs Jones.' Because we only had one set of clothes with us, we were going to be severely under-dressed for dinner!



Whilst sorting ourselves out we got a call from our credit-card provider. I thought it was a mistake at the time and we are very grateful for the patience of the person on the other end of the line. It seems that Andrew's credit card had been compromised and they had picked it up. No, we certainly *had not* bought anything in Euros today! It was lucky they had my mobile phone number otherwise we wouldn't have known - we were only carrying one phone with us! We were also now only carrying one valid credit card.....thankfully it was the card and not the account that was compromised... over the next month we had meals to buy and accommodation to pay for.

The Tasmanian Trail officially starts at the ferry terminal on the eastern side of the Mersey River. To officially start 'our' walk however, we made our way to the lighthouse on Mersey Bluff. Our motto was 'from Coast to Coast'. We were starting at the Bluff and intended ending at the end of the Dover pier. After the obligatory Start Photo we headed toward dinner a few hundred metres away. All was well until I realised I had left the one working credit card back at the hotel. Andrew idled his way into



the table. I sped back to our accommodation to get a card to pay for our upcoming dinner! I hoped sincerely that this comedy of errors wasn't an omen for the trek. The food was superb, the bill was high, of course, and we did overindulge a bit (had dessert) but it *was* the Start of Our Adventure after all!



The lighthouse at Mersey Bluff



## Part 1

## Tasmanian Trail – Day 1

### Devonport to Latrobe (17km)

11<sup>th</sup> February 2021. We woke up, and got up, just after 0600. We managed our pre arranged yoga session and our morning showers before breakfast arrived. We had ordered the granola...the hostess makes it herself, and we appreciated the result. It was a good quantity and it came with a bowl of fruit (raspberries, blueberries, strawberries and banana). There was also a good size bowl of yoghurt. We walked out the door just before 0800, turned right for a short while before cutting back right, toward the Mersey River. Unfortunately the river path was under repair in a section close to town, so there was a small diversion. I had trouble all day with the position, rather than the weight, of the pack (although that is significant) and developed a strained shoulder. My lower back wasn't ideal either. Not a great start! Andrew had promised a 'pack off' once we were over the bridge but I rejected a stop to the north thinking that turning into

River Road to the south would give us access to the shore in the right direction. But it didn't, and instead we headed uphill. I was not expecting that! I had one 'pack off' session on the road reserve but we didn't take a proper break until we got to the end of the new concrete pathway, once we were back at river level (and where salt meets fresh water). The path continues for a short way but after this it was dirt and they were constructing a boardwalk across the water, so it was up to the road for our first taste of 'road walking'. Negotiating the cars for the roadwork (for the boardwalk) we found there was not a lot of 'verge' on the right side so we crossed the road for a little while until we noticed that there seemed to be a track on the outside of the railing back on the right side of the road - so we crossed back again. Once we hit the reserve at the bottom of the hill we followed the path along the river (not technically in the 'Trail notes because horses aren't allowed on the reserve). There was a very large platypus statue outside at the Stockman's Hall of Fame and I read later that Latrobe is claiming the title of



Where salt meets fresh



Walking into Latrobe





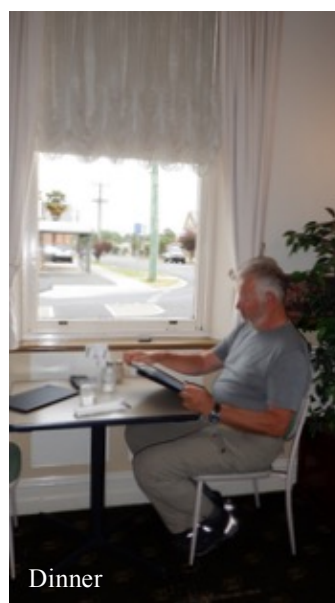
'Platypus Capital of the World'. We stopped at a seat on the banks of the Mersey for a longer break before heading into town. At a short distance after this I turned to see a nice view along the river and commented as such. I didn't take a photo but should have looked at my watch. It would have been close to 1100. Instead a few minutes later at 1105 I checked the watch and realised it was time to take a photo...it was not exciting – just Andrew walking into Latrobe. Our room at the Lucas Hotel wasn't ready, so we went for a walk up town to check out the settlement, and fill in time. We returned for a bar meal for lunch and then, having got the key, went up to the room. And went to sleep! The 1200 photo was missed for lunch, the 1300 shot missed because we were asleep. For the 1400 photo I went back for the river photo, and the 1500 was missed because we were asleep - again. Dinner was a simple pub meal down stairs in the dining room. Retiring Andrew struggled with the tv and we needed help to turn it on - the instructions were so old they were not relevant. We ended up watching the Australian Open whilst we ran the water for the spa; the hot indulgence made a good job of easing our newly sore muscles from Day 1. Outside the weather had changed and a steady but light stratus rain had come in, as expected, from late afternoon.



The view I went back for

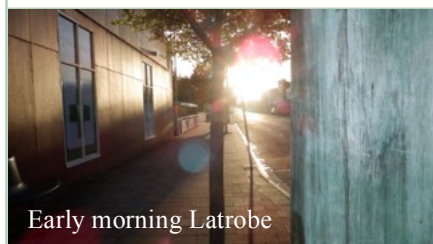


The view I went back for

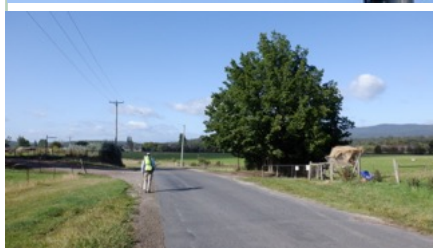


Dinner





Early morning Latrobe



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 2

### Latrobe to Railton (19km)

12<sup>th</sup> February 2021. It continued to rain overnight and at one stage when I woke up, in the wee hours of the morning, it was quite intense. We got up, and headed out the door for breakfast at around 0700, taking a detour behind the main street along part of a waterway, hoping to see one of these famous 'Latrobe platypuses'. The waterway turned out to be quite dirty after last night's rain and the bubbles seen were probably not of monotreme origin. Breakfast was at Belly's (RSL) before we returned to the hotel to pick up our gear. Andrew had been generous enough to offer to take my lunch to ease some of the weight I was carrying, but by the end of the day he rued that decision. The distance today was supposed to be around 19km but ended up a few more as we temporarily took a wrong turn (our interpretation of the signs). The walk out of Latrobe was on bitumen roads and the number of flies became annoying. However they seemed to be associated with the paddocks of cows (including one brand new mother) and after we left the paddocks and cows behind we left the flies behind as well. It was nice to get into the bush

(and the dirt roads were softer on our feet). Emerging from this terrain had its challenges; a track description regarding where to walk 'adjacent' a fence not clear, and we emerged through a paddock having to climb over a line of barbwire fence. That little task done, we walked up a gentle hill on the road to be presented with our first extensive view across to the mountains ranges we were heading toward. I didn't take a photo – but should have. From here we descended along the bituminized road lined with native forest, pine plantation and finally paddocks, before turning right toward Railton. Checking the water level of the Mersey River (because the Guide suggests you do) had us considering our options for Sunday night, with the preference now to take the 'Alternate Route.' But after checking in to the Railton Hotel we tried for some time in vain to find accommodation for the night along the 'alternative route'. By 2000 we hadn't secured accommodation at Weegenia and hoped the morrow would bring us better luck.

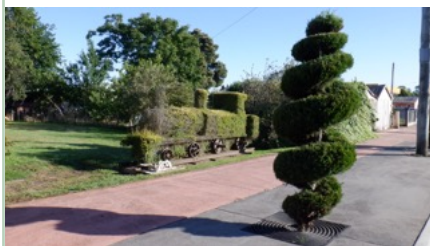


## Plodding Along

February to April 2021







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 3

### Railton to Sheffield (13km)

13<sup>th</sup> February 2021. In theory today was a shortish day, I had calculated it at 13.4 kilometers, so we weren't in a super rush to leave extra early. So therefore we were happy to wait for the 0830 opening of a particular cafe in town because we had been told it was 'gluten free friendly'. It wasn't! And given that, we could have had breakfast at the other cafe in town - which had opened at 0600! But had we done that we would have missed petting Molly, an old and decaying huskie, and Bessie, an 8-week-old border collie. The locals were friendly, most on the Park Run saying 'hello' or wishing us a 'good day', some asking whether we were going through to Dover, and a couple stopping for a longer discussion; one

saying we would probably hear his dogs as we passed his place, and having beaten us to his place half-an-hour or so later, came across in his Polaris with the 'said pooches' to have a chat. This discussion was more use to us than just chatting to a local in the street. Not knowing the normal level of the Mersey yesterday, but having decided it was flowing a bit fast and dirty for our liking, and subsequently deciding we would take the alternate route, we were informed by this local that the river level was indeed high. Last weekend when the tempest went through, this area got 88mm. Two nights ago this area got an extra 44mm. The river is normally reasonably tranquil. It wasn't when we went over it yesterday! And the reason this local takes notice of all





these conditions...he isn't only a farmer, he is involved in the local fishing scene! Our decision to take the alternate route was then justified. Before we left town we had, fortunately, managed to secure accommodation in Weegen for Sunday night so that worry had been taken away. The alternate route adds quite a few kilometers to the Trail so we weren't looking forward to the distance it would take us...although we did have a spa room booked at Deloraine at the end of it!

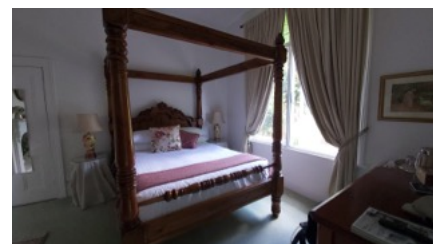
Today's walk led through a lovely path on the edge of Railton, past farmland with lifestyle properties, and along the old rail line



between Railton and Sheffield. The rail trail was lined with a mixture of bush and pine plantation, the latter of which was fringed with, or had the occasional small patch of, native plants that allowed a population of birds to flit around to keep us entertained.

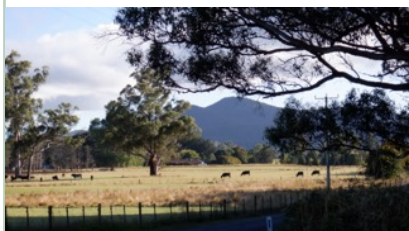
We had a small break at Red Cedar Creek Falls but didn't extend the walk to the caves on the other side of the waterway.

Our accommodation in Sheffield was a bed and breakfast. There are a few places to stay in Sheffield but I chose this one because there was a cat listed as part of the family. There turned out to be two cats and after a refreshing and quick shower to clean ourselves up we went cat hunting in the garden. Of course we found them and were very happy with our cat cuddles. We hoped for Chinese for dinner, as the Chinese restaurant in Sheffield



has a good reputation, but as they were booked out we ended up at the pub instead...just, squeezing in for an early session at 0600... and unfortunately a reasonably forgettable meal. We were lucky enough to get another pussycat pat on the way back in before we 'retired' to bed to watch the tennis.





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 4

### Sheffield to Weegen (27km)

14<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The hostess from Tanglewood was very generous to start serving us breakfast at 0630 (apparently she has served breakfast to guests as early as 0500). After a final cat pat we were walking out the gate at 0735. Once we turned into Formby Road we were presented with a fabulous view of Mount Roland. Yesterday in passing we'd had a rushed invitation to coffee along this road, by a family doing the Park Run in Railton...but as it was rushed and in passing, neither of us stopped, and I missed the number of Formby Road that they lived at (so apologies for not being social if you are reading this). A member of The Tasmanian Trail Association was passing however, and he stopped for a chat. I think he was a bit disappointed we were taking the alternate route, noting it wasn't as pretty. We acknowledged that

this might be the case, but we were concerned with the potential river height. He suggested the river might be dropping a bit, and would 'probably' be okay if we walked it at an angle, and 'probably' the water level was 'probably' only up to the top of his legs... that would be top of Andrew's legs! The makers of the river crossing training video for the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council would have a fit seeing anyone crossing a river at those heights. Apart from the fact it was due to rain tomorrow morning, and we may not get our legs dry and warm afterward, this individual normally crosses this river *on a horse*! I suspect the intricacies of crossing the river on two human legs hadn't quite been thought through.





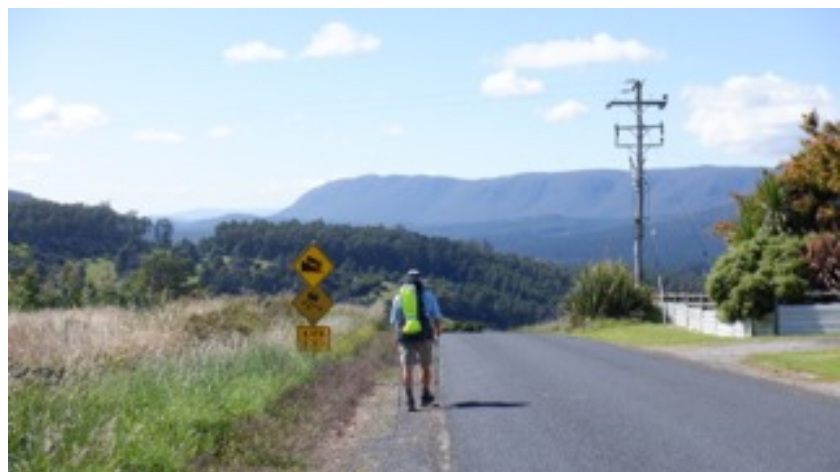


Lunch



The route we took today started through farmland, and had some pretty steep hills! As we lost the view of Mount Roland we gained the view of another section of the tiers and as we lost that view into the valley and the logging areas toward the Buelah Road logging coups, we gained yet a different view along the range. And sometimes it was even worth looking backward! Whilst there was also a small smattering of farmland, this latter section near Beulah traversed mainly through logging coups; some eucalypt and some pine, and some clear-felled. I was surprised at one stage to hear frogs croaking happily and loudly amongst the debris of a recently clear felled coup. The end of the day was not kind to my feet: the incorrect tying of my shoes meant I ended up with blisters on five toes; one blood. This means that even if my Injinjin socks dry tonight (I washed them

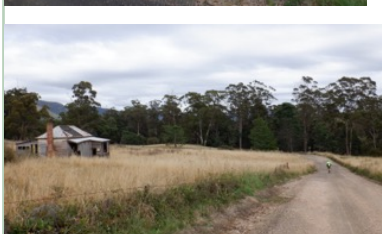
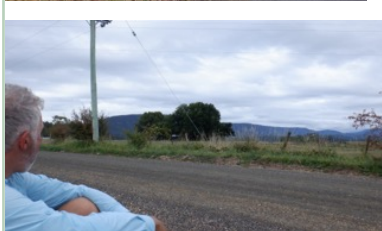
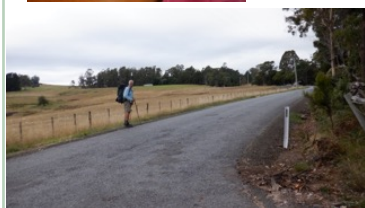
yesterday but they weren't quite dry so put the standard Snowgum socks on today – big mistake) I may not be able to wear them because they may not fit around the taping Andrew is going to apply to my feet tomorrow. The last couple of kilometers today were very hard. We had had a steep downhill run down to the bridge over the Mersey River, and then an even steeper uphill run to get to the Grundy Road turnoff toward our accommodation. Grundy Road was thankfully flat, relatively speaking. We got to *Elvenhome* at 1600 and into the cottage at 1605. There is more 'Up' to start tomorrow! After a quick refreshing wash we settled down to enjoy the afternoon and rest the body. Dinner was our first freeze-dried meal...eaten of course, in a more civilized setting than we were expecting - after all we had been expecting to eat it by a tent on the banks of the Mersey River!





We had met a local businessman on today's journey; a removalist /transport professional. He had made a guess as to what we were doing as we passed him as he, himself, had done some of the sections of the Tasmanian Trail on pushbike. Of course he was spruiking his wares, but it was nice to know that we had a contact for someone who could pick up and transport anything along the Trail if we needed it (to town centers or specific addresses, of course). We had just come up a particularly hard ascent and the thing I was thinking at the time was the 'things he might be transporting might just be us!





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 5

### Weeena to Deloraine (27km)

15<sup>th</sup> February 2021. We started walking at 0850, somewhat later than I had hoped. However, we had had a very comfortable sleep in a nice warm cottage, which in the scheme of yesterday's long day, was exactly what we needed. Of course Grundy Road is not at the top of the hill and once we reached the junction of Weeena Road we had to turn right. And then up. And up. And up! There were frequent stops (I even think horses coming up here would find it a push, but maybe that is because I was struggling) but it paid to turn around occasionally to admire the view. After we got around the local hills, we were presented with the panoramic view of the tiers and Gog Range. We finally passed the Weeena Hall (the only facility in town) and with a For Hire sign with a phone number out the front I am sure we could have negotiated at least a plot of land to camp on had we needed to yesterday, but given the up, I am not sure whether I would have made it. The 'alternate route' we were on followed the main road on the ridgeline with potential panoramic views but, certainly at this point it was bitumen road walking, and after the suggestion of a Trail Association member, we turned right at Beaumonts Road and headed back toward the main Trail. We dropped a fair bit

of height to the base of the Gog Range but it was great to be back in the bush. We took a short break at the bridge over Lobster Creek, which was lovely until the sun came out and suddenly it was very hot. We turned left into the main Trail just 1.3 kilometers from the Mersey River and followed forestry roads and smaller overgrown vehicle tracks through logging coups and bush blocks. Although we had skipped the Mersey 'crossing', we hadn't quite got out of getting our feet wet today and put our 'water shoes' to the test over Lobster Rivulet before taking a lunch break on the opposite bank. The water level was up around Andrew's knees and stronger than it looked. The major challenge of the day however, came after this. Dubbed 'Heartbreak Hill' by Andrew I couldn't tell you if this bit of up on Coxs Road was worse than yesterday's final ascent, but the view behind us (when we looked back when catching our breath) was worth it. Because we were walking through to Deloraine 5km off the trail, we found it was another long day, and we were definitely suffering at the end; road walking on the





Wattle Grubbing? Larvae of Wattle Goat Moth – used for trout bait!



Our first 'water crossing'

busy Mole Creek Road a challenge because we were tired and there was, in certain locations, no real road reserve. My blisters were playing up to the point of me limping and we tried hitching but no one picked us up, so we kept plodding along. We passed the Deloraine town sign at 1700 and reached the hotel not long after. After dinner at 1830 we retired to the room, where the jets of the spa



'Heartbreak Hill'

had a very welcome impact on a few sore and stiff muscles. As per previous nights it was then back to watching the tennis to wind down before bed.



Deloraine!



1100 photo

## Tasmanian Trail – Day 6

### Deloraine to Golden Valley (15km)

16<sup>th</sup> February 2021. We actually left our accommodation this morning the same time as yesterday, but without having breakfast. A Google search had suggested the best place for breakfast in town (according to several people anyway) was Mumma Buzz, and we sat on their back verandah enjoying gluten-free muesli and honey on toast. The 7km out of Deloraine on the Highlands Lakes Road to get back to the Trail was much prettier than the 5km into Deloraine on the Moles Creek Road, but there is a road safety issue. This stretch of road includes several blind bends with long railing sections, all built up at the top of very steep inclines. If the white lines inside the railing were at 'nominal normal' distance from the railing we would have not had an issue with this section... say a couple of feet. That would allow plenty of space to walk 'off/on road,' but allow us to just jump over the railing when bigger cars and trucks came. However the gap between the rail and the white line was much less than this on one very long section, and this had us, for 'safety reasons', walking on the outside of the rail, at the very top of a steep slope. If we had had a foot or so here to put our

feet on we would not have been concerned, but the flat bit at the top was at times only a few cm wide. This meant our feet were walking at an angle most of the time, and with the rough terrain we were likely to break the preverbal 'fetlock'. The safe path here would have perhaps been to retrace the road back to the Trail along the section we had come in yesterday – a standard road, with a standard 'almost' walk-able' verge, - and to continue the Trail along its proper course. We would have walked quite a few kilometers further, but it would have been a much safer option for the ankles.

We turned left with the main road at 1100; the pertinent photo taken just around the corner overlooking a felled logging coup! The instructions in the Guide are to use the track on the right hand side of this road toward Golden Valley. This track however is fragmented and was, at times, hard for us to follow. At one point the track markers direct you back to the left hand side of the road. We found the track back on the right after this (after where the alternate route leads off) but it





petered out not long afterward. We gave up after this and just followed the road reserve on the left hand side of the A5. We got to Quamby Corner Caravan Park just before 1500 and put the tent up for the first time on this adventure. It was even warm enough, for a short time at least, to put both the verandahs up. The common area of the caravan park had big comfy chairs to rest in, of which we took full advantage. After a shower, hot chocolate and dinner, we went to bed around 2000.





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 7

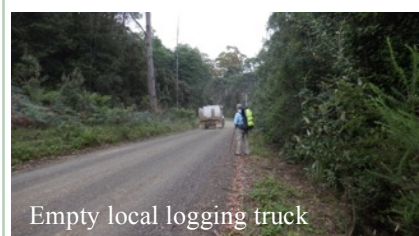
### Quamby Corner Caravan Park to Liffey Falls (12km)

17<sup>th</sup> February 2021. It was a later than expected departure but I was not too worried – we didn't have very far to go today. The first thing I noticed as we turned left out of the caravan park was the dumped rubbish and the smell of a dead animal on the road reserve; not a great start to the morning. At the next road junction we turned right, onto a dirt road and headed up hill. We soon entered bushland with private properties on both sides of the road, and the usual big warning signs of 'Private Property; Keep Out' on the gates. Our first break was sitting at one of these gates - on the outside, of course. This track was part of the Tourist Drive to Liffey Falls and several cars passed us during the morning; including two vehicles that had been at our camping ground last night. We stopped for a short time at a pleasant creek crossing, letting our backs rest, and enjoying the cool of the forest. The road here was lined with bush, and birdcalls were reasonably prolific. We didn't see many but the bird spot of the day was a scarlet robin that was flitting about on the road verge.

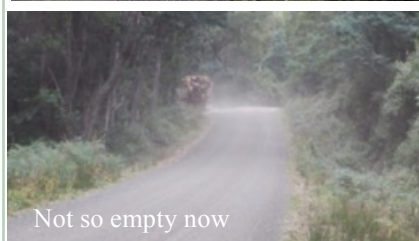
We had somewhat miscalculated our distance travelled this morning and our third stop was on the edge of a waterway opposite the entrance to a campground. Upon looking at our gpx file, and after having something to eat and then picking all the bidgee widgee seeds off our socks and trousers, we realised we were actually at our destination for the day. A few hundred meters later we were looking for a spot at which to put up the tent.

Andrew wanted a longer break after we put the tent up before we headed off to Liffey Falls, but he didn't get it – because the 6 kilometer return trip is estimated to take two hours, and I was conscious of the time. The walk, though rainforest habitat, was gorgeous. The Liffey Falls at the top of the walk, delightful. The only issue we had on this walk was a tiger snake crossing our path on the return trip.

My feet of course were still suffering from blisters and my first job getting back from the falls was to head to the creek and plunge my feet in the water. I thought the water would be refreshing – instead it was freezing. The feet didn't stay in very long! 22



Empty local logging truck



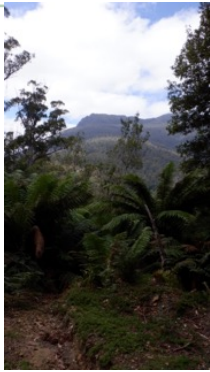
Not so empty now







a pleasant creek crossing



Liffey Falls



Liffey Falls





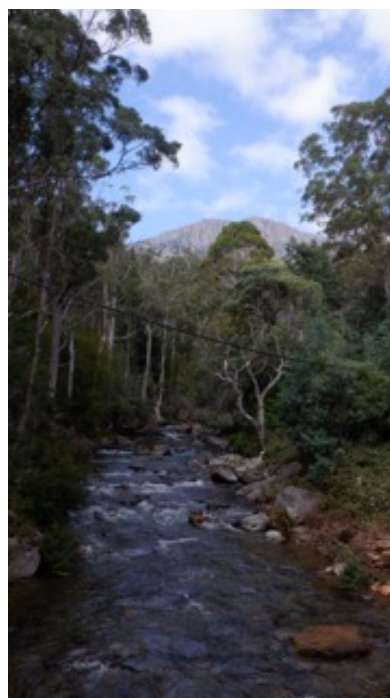
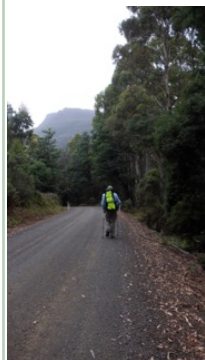
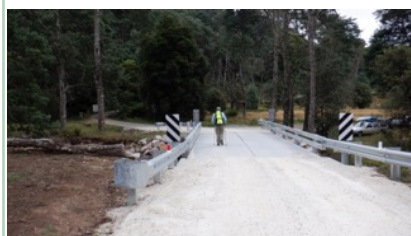
## Tasmanian Trail – Day 8

### Liffey Falls to Old Liffey School House (11km)

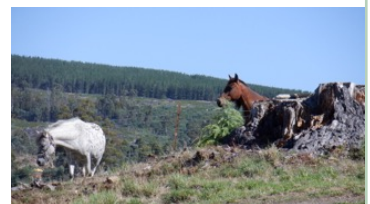
18<sup>th</sup> February 2021. Like yesterday, the morning started overcast and slightly cold, and I had my fleecy top on until we started walking, leaving camp a couple of minutes before 0900. The road out was lined with the occasional house, and paddocks that weren't wide; hemmed in by bush, or river, or escarpment. After a while bush lined both sides of the road. Our 1000 break was next to two cars at a gravel-covered car park at *Oura Oura*, a Bush Heritage property where the owners of the Bush Heritage vehicles were repairing the bridge. Noting that we might come back this way after our Tasmanian Trail walk to explore the property more, we moved on, emerging out of the Meander Valley region into the small farming community of Liffey. There are no services here, just the old schoolhouse with picnic tables and public toilets. The community is overlooked however by a spectacular section of range. We sat at one of the picnic tables at around 1200 for lunch.

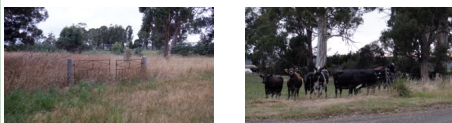
A white van had been present when we turned up but disappeared soon after, only to reappear later in the afternoon. We figured this vehicle was making the schoolhouse a

camping base but it left again and didn't come back. Instead, a young couple turned up with a well kitted out four wheel drive – they'd just walked the Overland Track – normally a booked-out, balloted walk (the government brought yearly quotas in just after we had walked it in 2005) but this young couple had managed to apply and be accepted immediately. A lot of the Overland Track visitors have traditionally been international tourists – of course there are none of those around at the moment so there are plenty of extra spots for locals wanting a good walk at short notice.









## Tasmanian Trail – Day 9

### Old School House to Poatina intake. (26km) Via the The Caves Track!

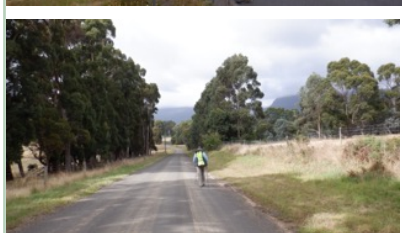
19<sup>th</sup> February 2021. We were hoping to have slept in the school house overnight to save time packing up the tent this morning, but we didn't get permission, so after dinner last night we put up the tent just before retiring – just as the sun went down. It rained overnight, but only the slightest of touches for a couple of minutes. The alarm was on for 0530. It was still dark and we tumbled all of our stuff out of the tent and onto the table for sorting. We left the schoolhouse a couple of minutes past 0700 and made good time to our first turn, 4.7km down the road. Just after we'd left the schoolhouse

Andrew commented 'we have an interesting audience'. He was talking about the bevy of cows watching us from the corner. These were hidden behind him and all I could see was the overgrown cemetery. I thought it was an odd comment until I saw the girls; I was wondering how he was seeing ghosts! Weeds were everywhere and several paddocks along this road were lined thickly with gorse. Finally the landscape opened up and we could see the distant cliffs of the plateau.

Our first pack-off stop was at the 6km mark on the corner of Musk Valley Road, where there was a pine plantation; and dozens of yellow tailed black cockatoos. They are fabulous birds and admiring their antics took our mind off today's long walk, for a short while anyway. Our second stop was just after we had started past the 'No Through Road' sign at around the 10km mark at the settlement of Blackwood Creek, and the third stop a km or so after this to take the bottom of our trouser legs off and put our gaiters on. We still had a bit of road walking to do before the hard bit, but perhaps the move was justified; we were obstructed by a tiger snake on the road shortly after this. The fifth stop was at the gate at the start of The Caves Track where we had a good nibble before starting the infamous track.

Our sixth stop was not long after this. I didn't really want to take the walking boots off to cross the creek. It is a bit of a hassle, but in the end we did, and by the time we had done that, crossed, and dried our feet enough to put our boots back on, it was 1235. And





now for the UP. There were many stops along the Caves Track (an old stock route), for varying degrees of time, and they weren't always together. At one point I felt really ill and I am not sure if it was dehydration or lack of energy, but that constituted a longish rest. The first part of the Caves Track wasn't that hard on the feet; an old vehicle track that reminded me of tracks in Lerdererg State Forest in Victoria, just a little steeper. After this there was then a false sense of relief, as the track became thinner but had less slope and entered a cooler part of the forest. Then we went up again - on tougher terrain than before. Another gentler incline gave us another (very short) break. The third section of 'up' seemed relentless: completely rocky and completely up. It was hard on the feet. And my poor blisters! The blood blister on the second toe on my right foot had swollen to half the size of the big toe and was around 1cm above normal height. It was painful (it wasn't the only painful blister) and I was getting worried about it. What would it be like when we got to Miena? I began to wish it would break by itself on the

track, but didn't really want to think about the consequences of that scenario.

We finally reached the top of the Caves Track at 1700. The packs came off for a good 10 minutes and we lay on the ground, exhausted. We eventually pulled ourselves upright again and tuned right to head along the Poatina Highway. We found the road to the Poatina Intake at 1740 and turning down this, found the campground at 1800. It took a few painful minutes to find the right spot to put up the tent; there was one small patch of ground that hadn't been dug up with four wheel drive tyres or infested with an ants nest. There was no escaping the mozzies though! My feet were 'killing me' and all I wanted was to take my boots off but with both of us running on empty we managed to put the tent up and then stumble down to the lake to collect water. Dinner was had as the sun was going down, and we fell into bed not long afterwards.









## Tasmanian Trail – Day 10

### Poatina Intake to Authurs Lake (17km)

20<sup>th</sup> February 2021. We were exhausted and we slept in. We didn't get back on the Poatina Highway until 0950, way after I wanted to. The morning was half over and the day was already very hot. My blisters were still hurting and there were a couple of rub spots but, thankfully or otherwise, my black toe had indeed burst up the Caves Track; there was no obvious blood on my socks, or feet - just a lot of saggy skin! We taped this up anyway to protect it but I found I was still having trouble with my feet during the day. One of our stops was over the gutter sitting on rocks opposite the Camp Bay Road. Several cars went past and ignored us. One sporty dark vehicle with two young males in it however, stopped, and turned around and drove back to see if we were okay. After confirming we were performing a bit of first aid, they offered to drive us anywhere we needed to go. We declined but I was immensely grateful, it bought a smile to my face to see someone cared. A large part of today's walk was along the Poatina Highway, the

side we walked along generally dependent on how much shade was on the road

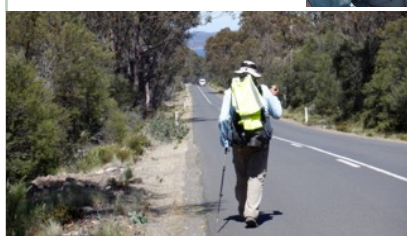
verge. When we were getting hungry we started looking for suitable, big enough and shaded, rocks to sit on for lunch. It took us an hour to find a rock big enough for both of us. I didn't take note of the gps location but we both agree it was a 'great rock'.

We found the turn off toward Gunns Marsh Road mid afternoon but we had trouble reconciling the markers with the instructions and the schematic in the Guide. I could see what had happened – one set of instructions was for an 'in season' traverse, the other for a 'closed fishing season' traverse. We followed the minor road before tuning along the power reserve. This was a hot day and we were already exhausted from the day before. And we both ran out of water – thankfully we weren't far from the Arthur Lake campground.

The campground was full of campervans, caravans and recreational boats, and although surrounded by trees the placement of occupation looked hot and dusty and not 29



Sitting on The rock







sheltered. The caretaker, bless his cotton socks, made an exception for us, and another camping couple, and let us camp in the 'no camping' section of the picnic ground: tree covered, shaded and protected, and close to the facilities.



Technically a water crossing!

In general we prepare and filter our daily water for the bladders the evening before they are needed, and we started this exercise again tonight for tomorrow's walk. The water in the toilets/shower area is listed as non-potable – it comes from the local dam but I don't think that is why we were having trouble. It seemed our filtering system, whilst never fast, had dropped to a 'proverbial trickle', and it was taking around half an hour to fill our bladders. Something was not quite right but we had to put up with it. Perhaps we could organize another filter to be sent to us once we got to Miena. We were in bed by sundown, tired and exhausted





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 11

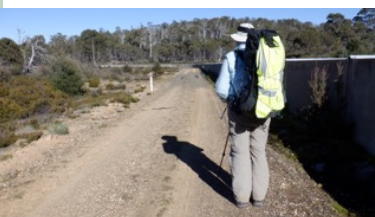
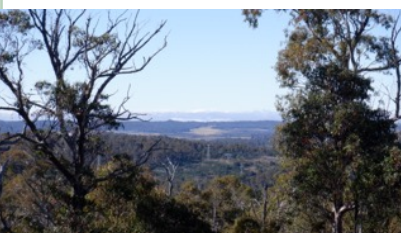
### Arthur Lake to Miena (23km)

21<sup>st</sup> February 2021. Although today's trek was shorter than the previous couple, it was still 23 kilometres and more than our comfortable limit (usually around 20 kilometres with the weight we were carrying), and we were still exhausted after our ascent up onto the plateau. We left the camp around 0800, crossed the Poatina Highway and entered Hydro Tasmania property. After a short while we were following the water flume. It is an open system so evaporation must be quite high, and there were leaks of various sizes along the bottoms of each concrete join. The day was sunny and there was at least one snake taking advantage of this – he was lying across our path. Neither of us had good aim – the idea was to pitch a rock just off the back of him to disturb him and get him to move on – our shots were very wide. Eventually he got the message.

The bushfires that had come though a couple of years ago were obvious here and it was interesting seeing where they had got to, and where they hadn't, sometimes a patch of bush was protected by a jutting rock or a change in aspect. With some of the leaves in the tops of the trees gone, the views across the plateau were extensive. There is private land down here amongst

the Hydro property and there were the occasional, familiar 'Keep Out' signs. Curiously there were also some trees with what looked like big plastic collars on them – were these to protect nesting birds perhaps? We had lunch under a tree on Todds Corner Road in sight of the Lake Highway and around 13 kilometres from our destination. I remember distinctly here a whole heap of butterflies descending on me as I passed under one tree, and that lifted up my spirits, taking my concentration off my still slightly sore feet.

Our final rest today was just off the highway adjacent Shannon Lagoon just outside Miena, admiring a pair of wedge-tailed eagles circling on the thermals above. After the obligatory photo at the town sign it was then just a matter of plodding into town. Except there isn't one; The Lodge, and 3 kilometers further on, the Hotel and the General Store, are the only large services here. A couple of kilometres from our destination (we were staying at the Lodge) we were greeted briefly by a member of the Tasmanian Trail Association. The committee had had their February meeting today at the Hotel – it was a pity we didn't get to town to meet them all before they headed home.



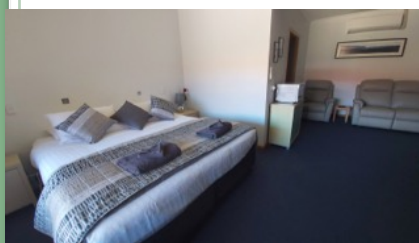




Once inside our room we closed the blinds, turned the heater on, took our shoes off and ran the spa, of which we enjoyed twice over the course of the rest of the evening. We actually enjoyed this spa several times over the next few days. Dinner was in the Lodge. Bedtime was early.







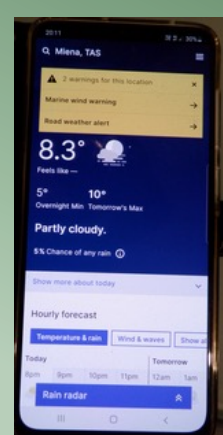
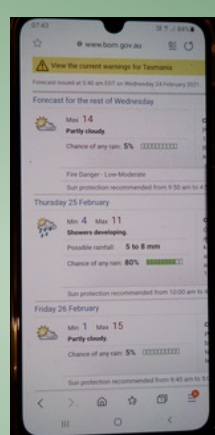
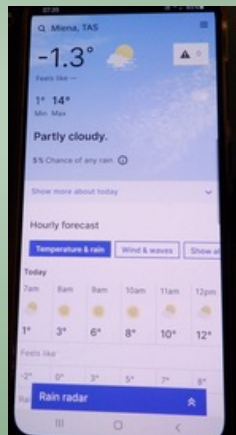
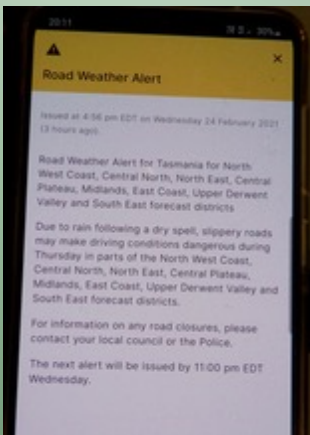
## Tasmanian Trail – Days 12-14

### Miena - Zero Days!

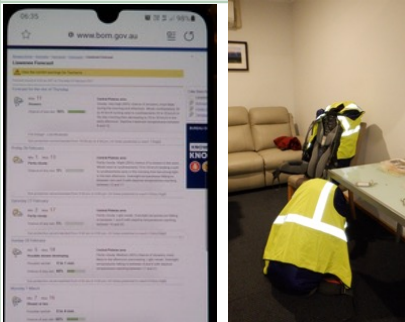
22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021. It was cold and we didn't really want to go out. But although there are breakfast provisions provided in these rooms they consist of a couple of slices of white bread, honey, butter, jam and vegemite, and corn flakes and wheat bix. None of that is really edible for me (preferably). So it was off to the General Store to see what they had. I must admit I was expecting a slightly bigger establishment, given the isolation of the place. We managed to get a packet of 'Carmens' gluten-free muesli, some yoghurt, apples and a block of chocolate (which was always going to be a problem – we tend to eat blocks of chocolate all in one go). It was late enough in the morning for the sun to be out but we were happy to be back in our room after the 6 kilometre round trip.

We spent the majority of the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 24<sup>th</sup> of February holed up in our room with the blinds closed, the heater on, and the television going between bouts of reading. I will note the chairs in this room are leather-look recliners and so very comfortable. The weather outside was cold but sunny, and spending a considerable time below zero degrees - even during the sunny mornings.

Daily maximums were predicted to be around ten degrees and at one point the locals were expecting snow – but it didn't come – I was almost disappointed. Apart from our morning walk up to the General Store on the 22<sup>nd</sup> our only excursions outside the room were one trip to the laundry room (the door next to ours) and several trips to the dining room – the door around twenty meters away. On the 24<sup>th</sup> we decanted all of the food we had sent to Miena into zip lock bags ready for the next part of our hike, sorted our spare clothes out and packed up anything left over (extra hand sanitizer, toothpaste etc) to be sent on to Dover – the mail only comes to (and goes from) to Miena twice a week! When we got to Miena on the 21<sup>st</sup> February we thought we had timed it beautifully, the days we were taking as a break were expected to be cold but on the 25<sup>th</sup>, when we were going to leave, the weather was predicted to pick up again. The days we took off were indeed very cold. The day we left, however, was worse.







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 15

### Miena to Pine Tier Lagoon (26km)

25<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The aim was to leave at 0700 - but we discovered that my water bladder suck hadn't been closed off properly, and as the pack had been leaning on it overnight the force had made 750ml of water leak onto the floor. The wet carpet was covered in towels and the pack emptied again so I could put more water in the bladder before we left. I had my thermal top, wet weather pants and gloves and beanie on as I walked out the door. Andrew started out with none of those but as he turned past the corner of the building and got a blast of cold air from over the lake he retreated and put his gloves and hat on. The wind was that 'metaphorical blast from Antarctica' cold, so a short time up the road we stopped again so he could put his wet weather pants on as well. So, instead of getting to the General Store before 0800 as I

had expected, we didn't arrive until 0815. As we had discovered earlier there was not a lot in the store that I could technically eat. We had had breakfast but figured the more food and energy we got into ourselves today the better. Wheat usually has unwanted consequences with me but I find I get less of a reaction if my iron levels are up. Having had large chunks of red meat three out of four evening meals at the Lodge I thought I would risk it. On a morning this cold a warm stomach from a meat pie was preferable to the cold of a tub of yoghurt as the next option. We also indulged in a hot chocolate before we moved on. (I might just end up with a few less follicles on my head)

As we left the Store I was surprised to find this 'major road', the Marlborough Main Road became a dirt





track, and the treed landscape we had had around the rocky shores of the Great Lake and the settlement turned into what I would refer to as low shrubby tundra. On a nice sunny day it would probably be a great spot for birds, but today was bleak, grey and windy; freezing with limited visibility. We had our second break in the foyer of the public toilet of the Little Pine Lagoon, sheltering from a cold, wind-directed, drizzle; a

drizzle that had been with us almost constantly for the past two hours. Once we passed the Little Pine Dam (with the sign to slow down for 'fire affected' wildlife) we started to descend back into a treed landscape; mid-sized specimens at first, but then into forest dominated by tall eucalypts. At first it would seem that the taller trees and thicker forest might help protect us from the weather, but then the rain really came down and we looked a bit like wet, miserable animals. We had three offers of assistance during the day: the first a local in an SUV asking if we would like a ride, the second the driver of a bus from World Heritage Walking Tours asking if we were okay (both whilst we were up walking along the grey, windy and drizzly tundra) and the third, a couple on holiday in an Apollo van who stopped in the forest when we were well and truly soaked. I thank every one of them for their generosity and concern.

The Guide suggests you need to be wary of logging trucks along the Marlborough Main Road and it isn't wrong. The road is dirt and with a 'Road Hazard Warning' from the Bureau of Meteorology we didn't quite know what to expect. When the logging trucks came they usually came in pairs; from south to

north, loaded with very large (old growth?) logs, or from north to south with empty trailers, the back trailer loaded onto the first with prongs and wheels in the air.

Looking at the distances I had calculated for today's walk got me a bit confused. Firstly the guide directions start from the Great Lakes Hotel, three kilometers further on than where we had stayed at the Lodge; secondly if you refer to the distances at the start of each stage in the Guide, it describes the main track. The main track is usually for walkers and horses and the alternate track for cyclists. However on the Miena to Bronte Park stage the alternate track is for the horses and walkers, and the more direct route covers the cyclists. The alternate route is longer. My numbers didn't seem to add up. As it was we took the cyclist route, and therefore shorter distance to our camp on Pine Tier Lagoon. Andrews's preference is to go off road where we can, and I agree with him. Ironically this section of off-road is where they have stipulated the need to be extra vigilant because of deer shooting; the season for which was to start in two days time, and for which we had originally packed the fluorescent vests that we have had on the back of our packs. However this section of track





also required us to cross two waterways, and if there were no easy stepping stones, I didn't relish the idea of plunging our lower limbs into ice-cold water on an already wet, ice-cold day. We thought it prudent to follow the cyclists route to where the options joined. Ironically when we got off the main road to where the participants joined the same track, it stopped raining and the sun came out. It was 1400.



On and off.

As we descended the Tiers the weather was improving, and our first glimpses of Pine Tier Lagoon were in sunshine. We reached camp, put up the tent and whilst Andrew was getting his bedding ready I went off to get water. Once back at camp I then started to set up my bedding. And it started to rain again! So we both dived into the tent ...and stayed there.. snoozing for a couple of hours before we decided we should have dinner before it got dark; the block of chocolate we had consumed once in our cocoon probably not enough to sustain us through the night. So in a little drizzle I set up the stove a foot away from the tent and boiled the water for our dinner. That done we re-cocooned ourselves until the morning.



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 16

### Pine Tier Lagoon to Bronte Park (9km)

26<sup>th</sup> February 2021. It is amazing how, when you have time to spare, you seem to fill it in. It was light when I first woke but I snoozed until well past 0700 because I didn't want to disturb Andrew. Whilst we hadn't walked an exceptionally long day yesterday (although it was past our comfortable limit), it had in some instances been quite trying: cold, windy, wet, and at one stage, as we were having a break in the pouring rain, the temperature had dropped so suddenly we could see our breath. I was surprised we didn't get snow. Andrew was also having trouble with his back; he had started up with a niggly back but we suspect slightly awkward packing, and the wrong set-up on his pack didn't help. So I figured, as we didn't have all that far to go today, that a sleep-in was acceptable. I was boiling water for breakfast at 0810 and had hoped to leave by 0900. It was however 0925 when we left camp, getting back onto the road rather than following the camp track by the lake shore, and immediately finding

ourselves on a long and steady climb. I had put my thermal top on, as well as wet weather pants, and was temporarily regretting this with the exertion, but when a gust of cold air came across us, acknowledged I'd made the right choice. There were mostly grey skies, with small tantalizing patches of blue this morning, with light dusts of mizzle. At around 1030 the cloud got thinner and the sun started to shine through. Wrens flitted and sang on the low vegetation beside the track - which was lovely to hear as our last night camp serenade had been the not so melodious raucous call of black currawongs, interrupted occasionally with the call of a lapwing, and the odd duck. I had seen a fan-tailed cuckoo this morning at camp but not much else. After crossing the flue and taking the private road we were thrust into some lovely bush and the bird calls increased, at least until the vegetation changed again and we found ourselves in scattered bush and what was obviously cattle country, going by the regular evidence that we had to avoid stepping in. Our one adventure for the day was crossing the old wooden bridge shortly before turning







right into the Marlborough Main Road. The first quolls we have seen we spotted soon after; it was a pity that they were road kill. After buying some goodies at the Bronte Park General Store for dinner we then headed up to our accommodation for the night.



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 17

### Bronte Park to Dee Lagoon (18km)

27<sup>th</sup> February 2021. The rifle fired at 0905 - jolting me into the realisation that today was the 27<sup>th</sup> February and the start of the deer-shooting season. Despite not having a tent to pack up we left relatively late at 0850. But then again, in the scheme of things we only had a medium distance to travel today. The sky had been a translucent grey first thing in the morning but the sun burnt through much of that leaving a friendly, not too hot, blue with plenty of cumulus. It was all road walking today. Our first stop was at the picnic tables at Bronte Lagoon, where we left our packs for a few minutes to visit the cairn on the other side of the canal. It seems, according to the cairn, that we had reached the geographical centre of the State! Touro' sightseeing done we continued on, starting up Victoria Valley Road.

For a road that has the word 'valley' in it, the first half hour was 'up', not 'down'. Our second stop was on a felled log obliquely opposite the lagoon estate 'Highland Lakes' where, at time of visiting, two waterfront properties were still available, and our third stop was in the shade, just up a side road north of the hamlet of Dee. The Guide states there are a number of suitable campsites one to three km after the settlement. I don't think we got to these, settling on the first opportunity we saw at the Bonnie Bay Boat ramp, where someone has obviously made a campsite here before as indicated by the burnt ashes in a made up fireplace. Unfortunately this location is



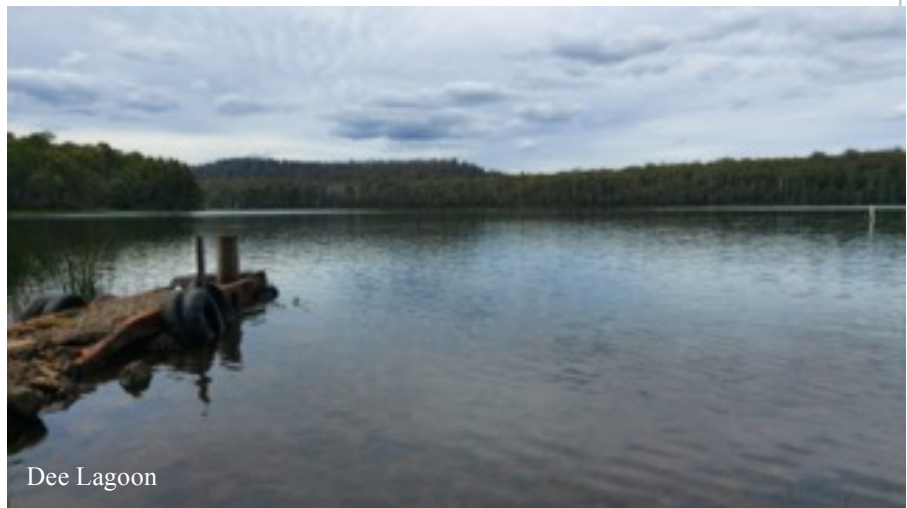
Geographical Centre of Tassie!





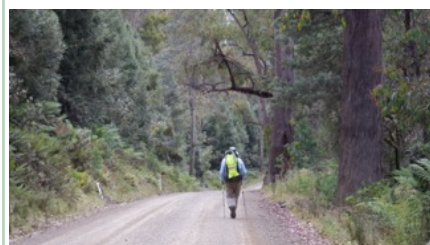


just under the road. Upon investigation on the track down to the water I saw a jetty nearby and found an access path through the tee-tree behind camp to a well-formed walkway that has obviously been here for years. Moss-covered stones lined the track that led to the jetty, and an old, but still serviceable, wooden chair. We spent most of the afternoon here; resting and watching the fish jump.



Dee Lagoon





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 18

### Dee to Private Camp A (16km)

28<sup>th</sup> February 2021. It was cold outside overnight, as you would expect it to be next to a body of water, but Andrew over heated. I however got a bit cold but I suspect my problem has been too much sugar in the past week (most of it preventable) and my issue related to bad circulation; my quilt is rated to a lower temperature rating than Andrew's so I should have been toasty. We didn't have far to go today so I didn't rush to get us out of the tent. I had joked last evening about getting up and seeing the sunrise over the water. We were too late for that, but there was still mist rising from the lagoon's surface. We delayed a little so the bottom of the ground sheet could dry a bit, and left camp at 0925. It was all road walking today so we weren't too worried about our timing, although I concede there were a couple of 'less than flat' hills. Just after we left our camp site we noted two tracks that led toward the lagoon and probably led to the campsites the Guide was suggesting. But we had been happy with our spot... and the use of the fisherman's bench!

Most of the morning was spent walking with bush on both sides of the road, some so

dense with lush species it reminded me of tracks around the Dandenong Ranges, or around the back of Warburton in Victoria. Whilst all was clearly logged at some point, sometimes it was hard to tell when, and the different profiles of the vegetation forest type kept the scenery interesting. Where we stopped for our first break was just lovely, on a grand fallen log that you would suggest it was a travesty to have left it. The bird song here was gorgeous, and prolific, and several thornbills flitted around us to say hello. The second stop was technically lunch, on the top of a rise in the middle of cattle farming country, and the third stop was camp, a generous location owned privately but with a drop toilet. We were the only occupants. Andrew's knee had started to give him a bit of grief today so mid afternoon he taped it up in preparation for tomorrow's walk. It was largely overcast today, patches of blue poking out here and there and when the sun occasionally showed its face, it was hot. But it was very pleasant walking. Tomorrow however has a forecast for rain.....fortunately we don't



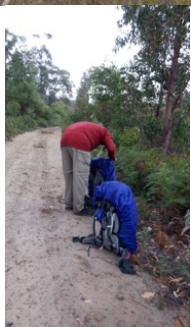


have to put a tent up when we get to Ouse.

After we had set up camp (which took a while to place the tent because some horse travellers had clearly not stored their horses in the horse paddock supplied but had them grazing in the camping area – we had to find a suitable spot that wasn't covered in horse poo) we took a walk across the road to the convict dam site, and then to the back of this camp site where an itperps board informed us about the Nine Mile Marsh agriculture scheme with convict labour. Finally around 1630, after exploring the local history, it was time to get the shoes off. Most of my toes are ok except the big right toe, which has decided to spring a small blister on the topside, adjacent the toe that had the blood blister (which we still have taped). Thornbills and pardelottes flitted around the campsite in the late afternoon and we went to bed early to the reassuring sounds of Black cockatoos. They always make me smile.







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 19

### Private Camp A to Ouse (25km)

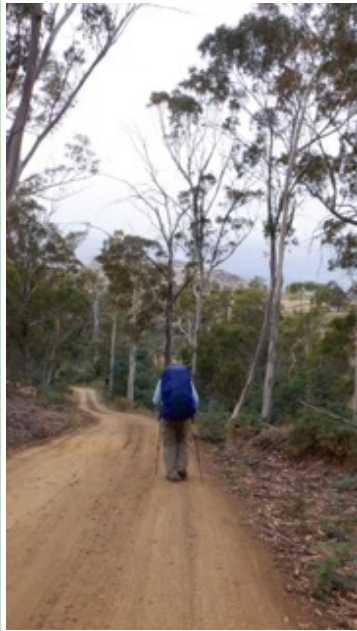
1<sup>st</sup> March 2021. The idea was I would wake up, and therefore get up, as I had been doing, at 0500 ish. And I possibly did wake up at that time, but I had had such an interrupted night that I promptly went back to sleep again. So when I realised it was 0605, the mattress was suddenly deflated and we made the move to get going. We had hoped to leave at 0700 but by the time we had been interrupted with a light shower (it had rained lightly at least twice overnight) it was 0755 before we were walking out the driveway of the camp. We took the detour (packs off) to see if we could see Victoria Falls but the result of a very steep downward slope (and then the reverse up again) with Andrew being conscious of his knee and ankle, was underwhelming. Of course the advantage of no water over the falls was that there was little water in the creek, which meant we could use the rocks as stepping stones rather than having to put our river crossing shoes on. The walk today was through various stages of regrowth forest with some obvious recent four wheel drive activity on the tracks...we assume weekend warriors collecting firewood - with or without a permit. I don't know how far the conservation area extended but I found it ironic that the notice board said 'no collecting of firewood' when it was in (or

was that next to) a logging coup.

The weather for today kept changing. Originally forecasts suggested the rain would start around 1100 and then they extended the predicted precipitation from overnight yesterday to be raining, according to the Bom app, all day today. It was 1035 when we got our first drops and stopped to put our jackets on. Five minutes later it seemed to get heavier so the wet weather pants went on as well. Twenty minutes after this however the rain stopped, our gear dried off and we were getting hot. So we stopped again and took the wet weather gear off. Five minutes after this it started to rain again! This time we didn't do anything about it.

For some time we had been hearing machinery noise, and eventually we turned a corner to see what we expected, a logging operation. It was a weekday after all. After passing all that death and destruction, we had our lunch break at the edge of the Lane Tiers Conservation Area before turning onto Victoria Valley Road. It was ironic the best bird spotting of the day was





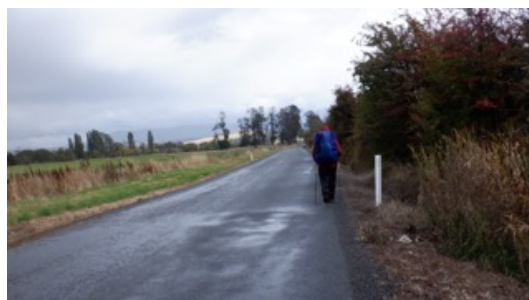
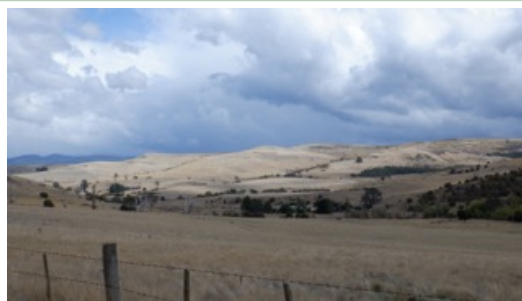
immediately after we had passed the logging operations; yellow rosellas, fantails, sulphur crested cockatoos, corellas. And just before this we'd spotted Scarlett robins. All in the middle of the day! Most birds had seemed to be sleep in during the grey morning skies; only a couple of thornbills were spotted near the falls.

After lunch we emerged into sheep farming country where a non-clearly heard hail from a farmer was interpreted by Andrew as an offer for a drink, and by me as an offer of a lift. Thanks, but no thanks, we are walking to Ouse. The sun was peering through gaps in grey leaden skies by this time and it was getting very hot. We took a break in the shade of the only tree to offer any on the next stretch of road, but before I got the camera out the shade was gone, a strong cold wind was blowing, and rain could be seen on (very) adjacent hills. The rain radar had an ominous small patch of rain forming nearby and there was a grey sky honing in behind us: we got our jackets and pants on in a hurry, and left them on, despite 15 minutes

later overheating and being wetter on the inside than out. But the rain did catch us before we got into town, falling at such an angle as to only get half of us wet. We walked into the outskirts of Ouse at just after 1500.

The room at the Lachlan Hotel was small, had a heater, windows that didn't shut properly, no television, and shared facilities. The hot shower was nice and hot however and a three course meal by the window downstairs was one of the best pub meals that we've had. We were happy we were inside as we saw the results of the increasing wind blow cardboard boxes swiftly down the main street.







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 20

### Ouse to Private Camp B (26km)

2<sup>nd</sup> March 2021. We were up at 0605, and downstairs and out the door just after 0630. The Bom app read that the temperature at Ouse was 10.1..(but feels like 7. I)... and I put my rain jacket on for wind protection.

Our first stop was the Roadhouse and we ordered a hot breakfast of fried eggs, bacon, tomato and toast ..but being the ‘back blocks of Tassie’ there was no gluten free option - so I didn’t have the toast. Coffee was instant – ‘but it is the good instant,’ we were told yesterday on the way into town. Really! I didn’t know there was such a thing as ‘good instant.’ We were about to leave just after 0705 but my water tube wasn’t connected so we finally walked out the door at 0710, taking the footpath on the opposite side of road...which happened to be steeper than the road itself! As instructed we turned into the Repulse Dam Road. There is a sign at this intersection listing the road as ‘Private.’

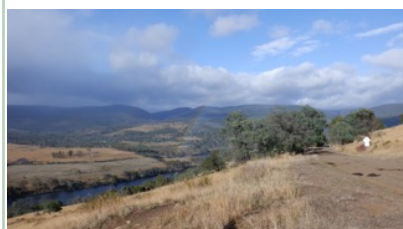
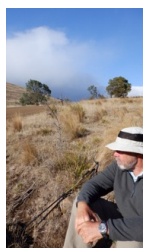
The odd thing about today was the millipedes on the road; first seen as we turned into Repulse Dam Road. Strangely they were mainly crossing from left to right, although a few were going the other way. They were lined up in rows of threes, across the dirt road, about two metres apart..

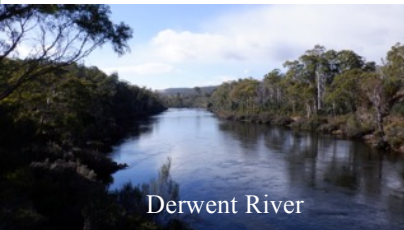
Over the day we would have seen thousands of them, on different sections of the same road and on roads either side of the Derwent River. Was it the season, or the temperature? It was a very strange phenomenon!

Properties at the Ouse end of Repulse Dam road were lined with plantation eucalypts (filled with the calls of yellow-tailed black cockatoos) but land use lining the road soon tuned to farming.

The wind picked up along the Repulse Dam Road and it started to feel even colder. The Bom App was now reading Ouse at 13 degrees Celsius, so the local air temperature had technically got warmer ... but the Bom App says it now *feels like* 5 degrees! More Brrr! We were concentrating that much on looking for somewhere in the sun to sit for our first break, that we didn’t realize the great view opposite until we sat down. Andrew swapped his rain jacket for his fleecy. I kept my rain jacket on but added the beanie and neck sock.

From this first break there were great views to our left for quite some time but





Derwent River



unfortunately we weren't dawdling to take them in. The wind was getting stronger, and colder, and we were looking forward to descending into some sheltered country. The Tasmanian Trail Association had commissioned one of their Interps Boards just beyond a cattle grid up here, but it was that exposed I wasn't stopping to read it, taking a photograph instead so I could read it later on. Finally, finding ourselves on the descent we found we had to wait just that little bit longer to get out of the wind – a herd of cows delaying our walk by deciding they would cross the road in front of us. If the first cows had just delayed a few moments we would have been past them, but having deciding to cross in front of us there was one, then two, then ten and twenty. And then more – behaving more like sheep than bovines. We weren't going to break the line up. It was better just to wait.

Shortly after our cattle experience we crossed the Derwent River, just below the Repulse Dam, and took a break just on the rise above on the other side. We had to make a decision here. This next section of the Trail crosses the Broad River but like the Mersey there is an alternate route if it is in flood. There had been some rain. But was it enough to put the Broad River in flood? This time we hadn't asked the locals. Unfortunately it was not

practical to check the river levels before making the decision of which way to go. If we took the alternate route from here, we were going to be travelling the same distance to camp as the main trail, so there were no issues on that account. So do we turn left and follow the alternative? Or do we turn hard right and head uphill and over, into the valley of the Broad River. The question beckoned: Were we up for a bit of an adventure? We'd already skipped one river crossing. We took a chance and tuned right.

To get to the Broad River from the Derwent we had to get over some height, and again it was a constant plodding up along roads lined with forestry plantation, and the almost aggressive 'Keep Out', 'Private Property' and '24-hour Surveillance' signs. I stopped regularly to catch my breath, and most stops provided a good view behind us. One large piece of farm machinery made its way slowly down the road and I am sure the driver wasn't expecting to see us. We finally found the rough track on the left between plantations that lead on a steep downward trail to the Broad River.

The river looked lively but not necessarily 'in flood.' But then again how were we to know? Andrew did a test run, stripping down to his





The other side!

underwear and ‘testing the water’ so to speak. The water was up to his mid thigh, probably a bit higher than preferred, and the river bed was mainly at all the one elevation (ish), but one large obvious hole was found. He came back to get his pack on, and traversed the waterway. It took him just over eight minutes – I know because I videoed it and the camera videos in 8 minute tranches. Once across the other side Andrew offered to come back for my pack, stating the water was in fact quite strong. I refused (although he did come back out on the other side a bit to guide me the last little bit). He’d already subjected himself to a fair amount of time in freezing water and I didn’t want him to be exposed to more cold than he needed to be. I got my shoes off and headed into the deep. I took quite a bit less time. I had seen where Andrew had gone across and followed approximately the same line, including stepping into the low spot. For the main the water was just at the top of my thighs, and

a bit higher in the low spot. The water was freezing and the water was strong, and I almost lost my balance once (teetering backwards), but managed to regain my poise. I was chanting at the river, “You are not going to beat me. You are not going to beat me!” And it didn’t. I didn’t time it but I suspect I was across in around 3 minutes but it was long enough to feel the cold. I spent the next minute desperately looking for somewhere dry and clean-ish (I found a rock) on which to sit down and dry down my legs. Andrew had found a bigger log for his toweling down. The wind was still chilly but we were reasonably sheltered from it – the sun helped.

After a good nibble for lunch we continued on, up the continuation of the track from the river, then right into a logging track and then a very steep up to the left, with a pine plantation on one side. Ironically it was along the edge of this pine plantation that we saw our only macropods for the day. We were admittedly getting tired but we made it out of the planation area, past farmland and down a road to a private camp ground by late afternoon. The camp ground was delightfully set up with a drop toilet and a fabulous



social shed. The tent was put up, our gear thrown over the tables to sort it out, and we collected water in the creek for tomorrow's hike. We were at the back of the shed when a ute turned up. This was a very strange visitation as it drove down to the campground, circled and left again. At first we thought it might be either the owner of the camp, or the owner of the property we were traversing tomorrow, come to say hello. However, when the vehicle left again we thought perhaps it was someone else, individuals who should not have been there and finding the site occupied left to avoid any confrontation.







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 21

### Private Campground B to Fentonbury (12km)



3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021. We had gone to bed extremely early last night; we were under our quilts by 1910. It was still very light but it was getting very cold. Like a few nights earlier when we had missed the roosting trees of yellow tailed black cockatoos, we discovered we were under the roosting trees of corellas. I wasn't going out to check which species. I started the night hot but after a midnight run to the 'thunderbox' stripped a layer off and found myself a bit cold. Hence the night was disturbed a bit, and we didn't actually start to get up until 0805. I wasn't worried about the time, we had a short day today.. in distance at least; Effort was going to be an entirely different matter!

This morning's task was to climb Mt Bethune, a rather large lump in the next property with a reputation of a hard climb with two false summits and a rocky surface. Admittedly it took us a while to reach the actual summit, but that included several stops to get our breath back, and a stop for morning tea to admire the view. I didn't exactly take the hourly photo today, I had run

out of power in the camera yesterday and although I had hooked it up to the battery bank overnight, I clearly hadn't hooked it up properly, so the only camera we were left with was the phone - which is also our navigation device and I didn't want to waste too much of its power. The views from Mt Bethune were worth the climb and we headed off the top around 1200. I missed the easy way down and ended up bush bashing along animal tracks to the road below; to Andrew's disappointment: he managed a misstep, failing down a hole and getting scratched. He is now referring to it as 'Trish's Folly'. The highlight of our climb; a flock of quails on the way up, and an echidna on the way down. Lunch was on Rockmount Road after 1300 (which was late for us) and 1400 was spent as a 'pack off' at the corner of the Ellendale Rd. The 1500 photo was just as we got to our Bed and Breakfast. After a refreshing and welcome shower, we spent the afternoon resting our feet in the warmth. At 2000 after a 3-course dinner we hurried to the ponds at the top of the property to try to spot the



resident platypus...and were pleased that the mission was successful. We got back to the accommodation via torchlight.





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 22

### Fentonbury to Bushy Park (24km)

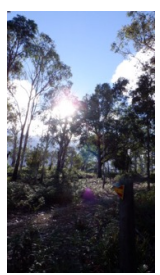
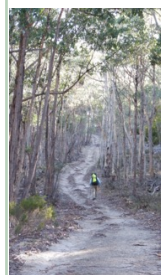
4<sup>th</sup> March 2021. We were up early this morning (0545) to see if we could spot the platypus again. We got a better view of the monotreme and we didn't have to use torchlight to head back to base. We were waved off the premise by the hostess, after we had technically consumed two breakfasts each, leaving Hamlet Downs at 0830. Because we were off the Trail we had to retrace our steps a couple of kilometers until we turned right back onto the Trail into a private conservation property, where of course very shortly we found the track going the proverbial 'Up'. To be fair the track was actually undulating, and we went up and down and then back up though the bush before we emerged into an open paddock and turned right. The view here was extensive and I had the urge to burst into song: 'The Hills are alive' or that sort of thing... there was a great view spread out before us. So stopping myself from skipping down though the grassed area we made our way to the next marker which sent us up to the left and back up though more bush before emerging into more paddocks. It was then up, up, up ... to some absolutely fabulous views, and some ferociously cold and strong wind. The

Meteye wind predictions for the Mount Field area, which was all of 11 kilometers away, had predicted 35-45 knots for today! That frightens us enough in the boat. We are a lot more wind affected on foot!

From this high point, the Trail then follows a track down to Meadowbank Road. This track was under refurbishment with the detritus material from two on-site quarries, and not yet fully bedded in, making underfoot stony, rocky and uneven, and our attention was more on where we put our feet than admiring the view of the Derwent Valley below us.

At the junction with Meadowbank Road we stopped and used what we assume were the blocks used for chopping wood as stools on which to eat our lunch. The adjacent house was empty but the owner came home for a quick errand, offering the use of the chairs on his verandah for somewhere a bit more comfortable to sit, and the use of his tap to top up our water bottles if we needed to. We thanked him for his very generous offer but we were about to be on our way. The walk along the valley was pleasant with views across to the Derwent River. At one point we passed some 'brambles' – a large and long stretch of blackberries where

53





the calls of many small birds could be heard. Because they were hidden in the foliage we couldn't work out whether they were small foreign finches or sparrows (also an introduced species). We knew there were a few birds calling but we didn't realise quite how many birds were in this patch. Hidden in the patch was also a brown falcon, obviously having cornered a significant number of individuals and as we got close enough to disturb the predator he left in a flurry, giving us quite a start. And then the flock of finches that had been penned in left too – there would have been at least twenty of them, possibly more.

Our next stop was at the crossing of the Tyena River and a notice at a gate notifying the public of 'no hunting or fishing, or unauthorized access'. It looked like this property was maybe being managed for conservation purposes. I assumed that the Fenton Forest we were soon to turn into was perhaps an extension of this. How wrong can one be! The Fenton Forest was not a forest at all. Fenton Forest is actually a hops estate and the landscape we turned into was all farming land and houses; a traditional hop community built around the crop. After passing

the paddocks full of hops and the old farm buildings as well as the cooperative houses, we ascended again to bare and barren pastures on the top of the hill. There were practically no trees; just a high exposed ridge with wind strong enough to almost knock us over. The view however was great. We needed a break but finding shelter out of the wind was almost impossible – the one tree we settled under had also been used by a flock of sheep and putting our packs down without putting them in sheep poo was tricky. We didn't stop long. It was cold and it was windy and we were getting tired, and desperately looking forward to the end of the day. Descending into Bushy Park we passed locals at their houses who weren't overly friendly, but the drivers of the hop machinery on the main road all gave us a wave; and interestingly most were female. We stopped at the general store for a quick break and something warm to eat. Of course<sup>54</sup>





Entering Fenton Forest



there was no gluten free bread. 'We only just started offering salad sandwiches,' said the woman behind the counter. 'For the cyclists –but they don't stop here often.' 'Seems the country Tassie roadhouse customer is a Greasy Joes sort of a pal.

We finally hobbled onto the recreational ground at 1615 where the caretaker met us, made sure we had a toilet key and some water. And access to electricity to boil it! Because it was due to rain, we were allowed to put the tent up under shelter.

The locals use the recreational ground at Bushy Park to do their exercise and several groups of people turned up to walk or run circuits around the oval. The fist memorable visit was from two girls, one of whom I think had a piddle outside the locked toilet door, on the concrete where you walk in (I saw her walk toward the door and behind the building

and not emerge for a couple of minutes. I know the door was locked and I know she didn't have a key – yuk... and so inconsiderate – I had to walk though that!). The other memorable visitor was a young man with two dogs. One was on a lead – an Alsatian - and they did laps of the oval together. His other dog was an Australian Shepherd, and allowed to run off the lead. This dog, decided that he would much rather play with us than his master, finding a stick for us to throw to him and being particularly insistent on our attention!

The evening was chilly and not conducive to staying up, even with the eclectic light we had access to; I had a hot shower before going to bed



Derwent River







## Tasmanian Trail – Day 23

### Bushy Park to New Norfolk (23km)

5<sup>th</sup> March 2021. We were up at 0705 but the preferred departure time of 0800 was not to be. By the time we had got our gear ready and locked up all the stuff we had borrowed in the ladies toilets, we didn't actually leave the recreational ground until around 0900. Crossing the Styx River meant waiting for the traffic as the bridge had just enough room for two vehicles passing; the bridge over the Derwent however had been relegated to a single lane and there was plenty of leeway on each side of the vehicle lane for pedestrians. The climb out of Bushy Park presented us with great views over the valley and we passed a lot of old houses that would look good if someone brought them back to life. After we had crossed the Lyell Highway we began the slow climb up into The Black Hills.

Two groups of birds held our attention along this stretch. The first was a group of white-faced herons who were working a paddock together, rather than individually hunting in the nearby dam, and the second was a group of brown falcons, who seemed to be hunting together in a different paddock. There was also one brown falcon on his own in a different area. We wondered who had the greater success, but with that many predators (we hadn't

seen many bids of prey on the trip at all so far) there clearly is enough food around. The county has been dry – perhaps a mice plague?

Further up into the hills the properties changed from open farmland to plots with more tree cover, and its general look and feel reminded me of the Christmas Hills area to the north east of Melbourne where we used to live. And of course as we went up, the view behind us just opened up more and more. A local stopped her car to ask if we were lost, looking surprised to find two hikers on this road. When we said we were doing the Tasmanian Tail she seemed to have some recognition. It is clear that even if the locals are aware of the Tasmanian Trail – they are not expecting walkers!

We finally got to the highest point in the road and started coming down the other side; stopping briefly to take some anti inflammatories for my leg (it started playing up on the way into Ouse but has really been giving me jip today) and buy some eggs from a road-side stall, where the Black Hills Road is joined on the left by



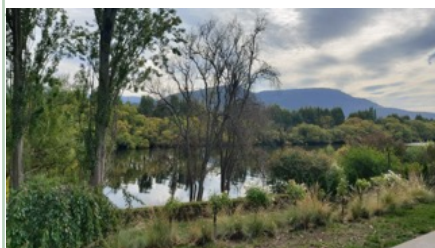
Rodgers Road, (opposite the deer farm). This section of the road ended up being quite steep with limited scope to get off the bitumen with oncoming vehicles. We got to the outer edges of New Norfolk around 1500; surprised that one of the locals in Magra hailing that she ‘was pleased to see us.’ Did she recognize that we were doing the Tasmanian Trail or just congratulating us for being hikers down a steep road? We got to our overnight accommodation at 1545.

We had booked a taxi for 1800 to take us into town for dinner (because we definitely did not feel like walking), but it didn’t turn up, and we stood in the cold wind for 15 minutes until I rang again. We had dinner at the Chinese restaurant before a quick shop at Woolies for breakfast. We didn’t bother trying for the taxi again, and walked back (or in my case hobbled back) to our accommodation.

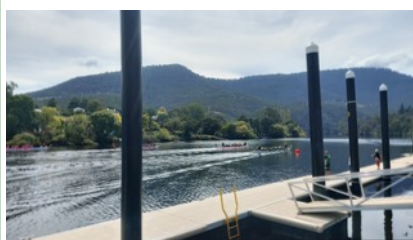


Not the most exciting 1500 stop we’ve had!





Waiting for an award winning degustation experience



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 24 - 25

### New Norfolk. Zero days

6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> March 2021. We had planned two ‘zero’ days to rest in New Norfolk. And apart from rest, we hadn’t planned to do much with the time. For the 6<sup>th</sup> March we thought we would take the historic waking trail around town but I don’t think my leg would have managed the entire distance. We did get to town (I hobbled) and enjoyed the Saturday market (I hobbled) but then deciding on an early lunch ended up at the Agrarian, a local icon (to which, of course, I hobbled). Bookings are usually required at the Agrarian but we presented early and there was one spot left if we sat down now. The two-hour degustation menu was delicious but even two hours was not enough to take the pain away from my foot.

Andrew taped up my leg as a bit of an experiment on the morning of Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March and we headed back into town. The strapping helped a little bit (I hobbled with a bit less pain) and we enjoyed a short circuit walk of town, watching the dragon boat races, before getting a few more supermarket supplies and returning to base. We decanted our next lot of food into zip lock bags and prepared the mail with all extra clothes and supplies etc to be sent back to Hobart. Andrew repaired my right

walking boot, which had a split about ten cm along the base. I knew I needed new boots but we were hoping to get through the trail before replacing them. We purchased more pain killers at the pharmacy and in doing so found out tomorrow was a public holiday. The plan had been to post our package off to Hobart before we left town. That clearly wasn’t going to be possible and we would have to make alternate arrangements.

## Tasmanian Trail – Day 26

### New Norfolk to ... Hobart!

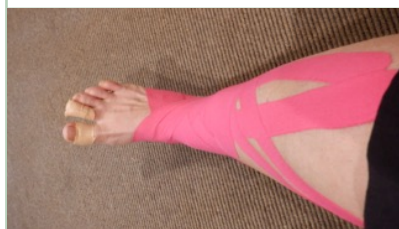
#### Calling a Halt! (7km)

8<sup>th</sup> March 2021. We were up early and left our accommodation around 0730. I had dosed up on anti inflammatories and hoped they would see me though. The pain in my foot/ankle was dulled, but it was still there and I was still hobbling rather than walking. In the end we stopped more than usual, and it took us two hours to get to Lachlan, which was only 7 kilometers up the road! Andrew gave me a choice. 'Now is the time to pull out'. We had another 19 kilometers to go today, the majority of which were going to be a very steep 'up!' The stubbornness in me responded with 'I've got this far, I'll get through the rest of it,' but as we walked away from the Lachlan recreational ground I thought again. My leg was still in pain and not feeling much better, if at all, with extra drugs. Perhaps the decision to go ahead was a mistake. A few hundred metres after the rec ground I called a halt and we tuned around.

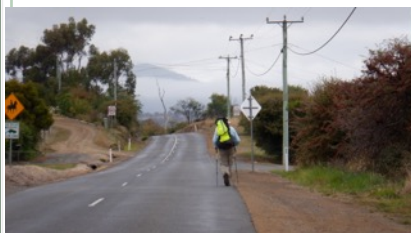
To get back to New Norfolk we called a taxi. Not exactly trusting the local taxi's reliability to be prompt after Friday nights' delay,

we were delighted to see the car drive up the road within a short period of time. The taxi took us to the bus stop in New Norfolk where a bus route was scheduled to run to Hobart in an hour's time. It was a public holiday and a Sunday timetable, and we did have to change at Glenorchy, but at this point we didn't care. Our taxi trip had briefly diverted past last night's accommodation to pick up our box of stuff – there was no point the hostess sending it to Hobart if we were travelling there ourselves today.

The bus trip back was quiet and contemplative. I was sorry that today was ending this way but kept telling myself it was the right thing to do. I would see if I could find a physio appointment tomorrow – not even knowing if it was a physio I needed to see. Of course the bus didn't stop anywhere near our hotel so I had to make a final, painful hobble along a few city blocks. Once inside the room however, I took my boots off and put my feet up for the rest of the afternoon.



The walking boot repair!



On the bus to Hobart



## Part 2



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 27

### Lachlan to the Wellington Range (19km)

31<sup>st</sup> March 2021. After a break, and a Bruny Island social adventure (commercial day-walking tour), we decided we were ready to get back on the Tasmanian Trail. My leg/ankle was as good as it could be, given the circumstances and without giving it a proper test, and we made our way back to New Norfolk so we could finish our little adventure, starting where we'd left off twenty three days before hand. We spent two nights in New Norfolk before setting off, catching up with another Trail Association member and getting ourselves mentally prepared.

We'd already walked the 7 kilometers to Lachlan on 8<sup>th</sup> March, and I couldn't see why I needed to walk it again! So, after a very hearty breakfast at Explorers Lodge, our host (very generously) dropped us at the recreational ground at Lachlan, and we started where we'd left off, at the bottom of the ascent up the Wellington Range. We were warned that this section of the track was likely to be rough, with lots of ups (more on the first day) and downs (most due tomorrow) and water hazards (a lot of them four wheel drive created); and to a large extent it lived up to its reputation. We were

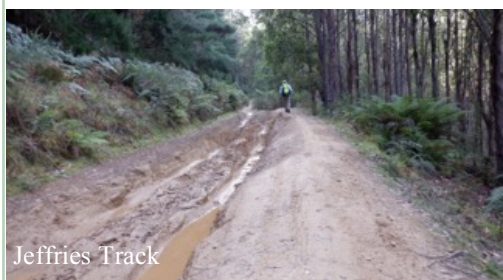
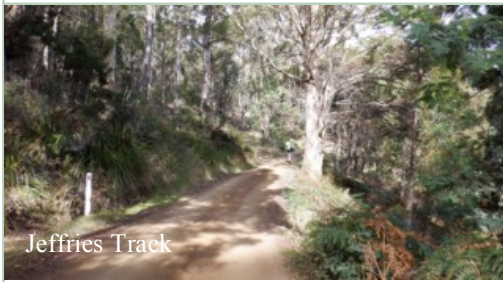
lucky; we managed to get through without getting wet and our feet remained dry thanks to some previously bush-bashed bypasses.

The first part of the track today passed through a mixture of farmland and bush, then a pine plantation, and then eventually through the Wellington Range National Park. Some of the national park landscape was quite wild and the bush was at one point so thick that separately we both thought we were going to have to put the tent up in a road water runoff gutter. Andrew's question of whether it was going to rain was in relation to this. I didn't click. There was no rain forecast but it started down at 1800; fortunately we had found a more suitable location to place the tent.

We had started looking for a camp site early, a few kilometers before the large waterhole at around the 25 kilometer mark for this stage (or about 19 for us today), and our turn off, at the highest part of this section. We found a 'logging' road to the left blocked by a locked, and very substantial, gate. An adequate patch of ground on

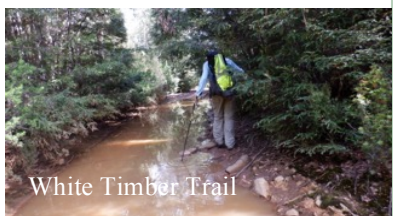
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which to put our tent was on the other side of this gate, but on the track; however we figured any vehicle coming through here, either way, would be going slow enough to stop. But this location was still 3 kilometers short of the top of our preferred traverse for today, so we noted its location if we had to come back, and kept going. As we ascended other options presented themselves. Mostly they had a rock substrate, one had a substrate of old bark and wood detritus, and all were just on the side of the road. When we got to the point to turn left at a link road, with the large waterhole on the right, we put our packs down on the shores on the hard-ish clay of the waterhole's edge and went for a further explore. We headed further along the White Timber Trail (not the Tasmanian Trial) to where it crossed the top of Judds Creek, to ascertain our access to fresh water; the water in the waterhole was disgusting.

today we thought we would push on without filling up. There was also no obvious camp spot here. Investigations down the right road however (a turn to the left from opposite the waterhole) resulted in us finding an adequate spot to put the tent. It wasn't wonderfully comfortable, it was on the top of a pile of gravel, but as it rained an hour or so later it was clearly more suitable than the waterhole!



Access would have been fiddly but doable at a pinch but as we were carrying extra water





Morning view from tent



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 28

### Wellington Range to Judbury (15km)

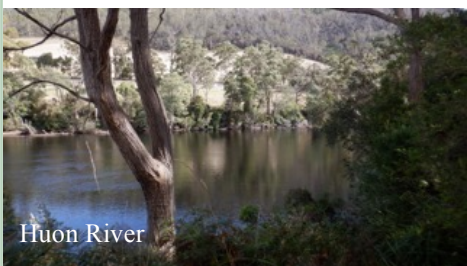
1st April 2021. Fortunately it wasn't raining when we got up but the tent was a bit damp from the overnight rain 'that wasn't supposed to happen'. Most of today was down hill, and most of the roads lined with vegetation. A short distance below our camp was a quarry, and we found various spots subsequently that could have served as camp spots for us, and indeed, going on the tyre tracks, had clearly served for 4wd drivers. Not long after we had started we found the road was lined with fabulous saw sedge, and some so high it blocked out the view to distant hills for me (one place where it would be an advantage to be on a horse). We reached an area with official signs to Billy Browns Falls - 1.5 hours walk, with warnings of slippery surfaces. A pity we hadn't known about this walk beforehand or I would have adjusted today's schedule to include it. A car park was adjacent the road here and the road below us looked good. But any thoughts of driving

back here in a hire car to visit the falls were dashed soon after. The road got rougher and steeper and finally where it crossed Judds Creek it was almost completely washed out. There would be no revisiting this spot. We filled our water bladders at this Judds Creek crossing.

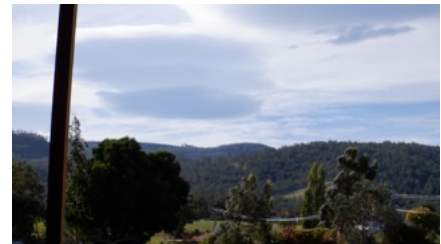
Does a tree fall in the forest? We didn't see it but we did hear it...one almighty crash.

We finally came out in the back blocks of Judbury, and there were more houses than we expected after our drive through the hamlet a few weeks ago. Andrew hadn't had a good day and he was exhausted when we got to the Judbury Recreation Ground, taking advantage of the shade of the trees. The sun was out but the wind was just a little strong and chilly to be comfortable; I'd lay down on the old dray near the campsite hoping to straighten my back but moved out of the breeze after a short period of time.





And the wind was far too strong to put the tent up – it was several hours before that task was done. We spent the afternoon laying on the ground, relaxing and sitting in the lounge chairs under the shelter of the Judbury Cricket Club Rooms. Here we had a quick chat to Kevin of Tasmanian Wilderness Experiences (who, for a fee, could get us back to Hobart from Dover on the fourth April as part of his Cockle Creek run - if the buses weren't running), and D of the Tasmanian Trail Association. We went to bed at dusk to the chortle of laughing kookaburras.

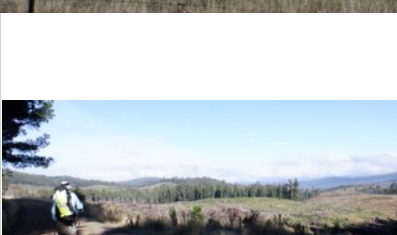
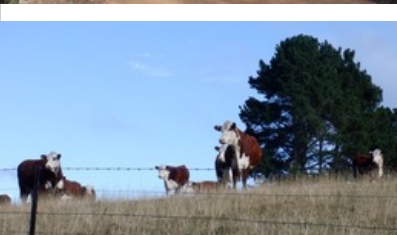
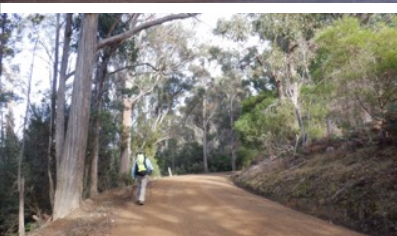


Judbury Recreational Ground



Judbury Recreational Ground





## Tasmanian Trail – Day 29

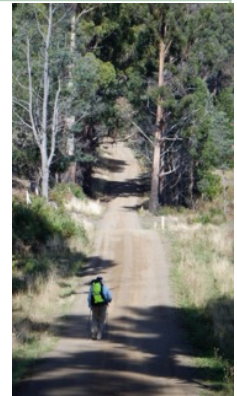
### Judbury to Geeveston (27km)

2<sup>nd</sup> April 2021. The kookaburras woke us at dawn – had they been calling all night? The tent was wet from rain overnight but fortunately it wasn't raining now. We transported our stuff across to the shelter at the cricket club to cook breakfast and pack up, leaving the tent as long as we could, but it wasn't quite dry as we folded it up. Our visitors for breakfast were a pair of scarlet robins.

We were packed up and heading off at 0850, just a little later than yesterday, and we crossed the bridge over the Huon and headed south. There was minimal traffic on the road. I had had a bad sleep; probably a combination of hormones, too much air in my pillow and not enough in my mattress. Subsequently I was awake on and off overnight and very surprised to hear traffic from around 0400...where it came from was a mystery - Judbury is not that big!

Clouds were dropping down onto the hillsides as we left, and it was a bit chilly, but it turned into a hot day. Shortly after we turned into Bermuda Road we were passed by two groups of cyclists; the first were a couple who joked they'd rather be on bikes than foot on the journey from here to Geeveston - but I

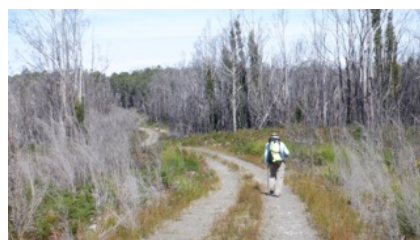
think they were local. The second group was a group of four. This group (from Queensland as it turned out) had passed us as we had come into Judbury yesterday afternoon. At this point we had stopped to put some tape on a hot spot on my ankle, and the four boys stopped to have a chat. They were doing the Trail as well but due to finish in Dover today...and cheekily mentioned they would be in Geeveston in 1.5 to 2 hours! It would take us another seven hours! It was great to have a chat to fellow trail traversers, the first we'd come across since Miena! From this point it was 'up' for the next few hours: bucolic farming scenes, growing plantations, and the odd patch of wet forest with ferns that suddenly opened up to felled logging coups. It was a day both of contrasts and some lovely distant views, ironically only available because of the removal of trees. The traverse down the power easement was very steep, and quite exposed. When we finally came to civilization we were getting quite tired. Our feet were very sore and when we came across a self contained cottage we had contemplated



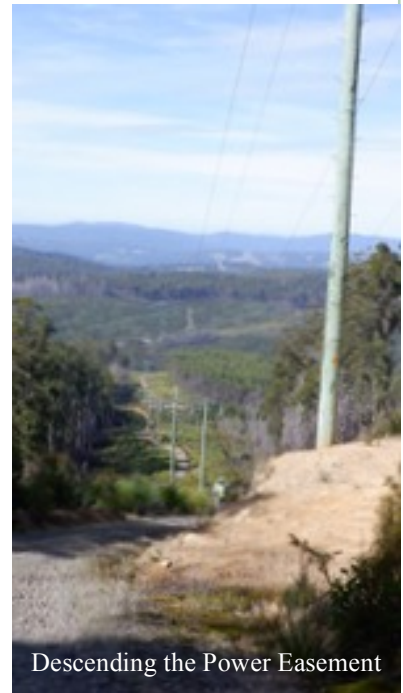


booking we knew we were only a couple of kilometers from our destination...but at that stage a couple of kilometers seemed too far, and we took an extended break by a fruit packing shed. We had an early dinner at the One Stop Shop before heading to our accommodation, because we knew we wouldn't have the energy to walk back once we had dropped our packs. I had a much smaller room booked at Cambridge House this time (as opposed to the first booking just after we pulled out of the walk in March), but given the date (Good Friday) and the fact we had booked it so late, we were just very grateful it was available.

Bird spot of the day,,. Lyrebirds! Three of them: two singing and mimicking with a fabulous array of different bird calls. The first spot was just after we had stopped for lunch, the second spot was in front of us crossing the road, and then the third gave a fabulous Broadway performance as we were resting before turning into Old Bermuda Road. It is amazing that these wonderful birds can live in small pockets between logging coups, and in an area that burnt severely a couple of years ago!



Descending the Power Easement



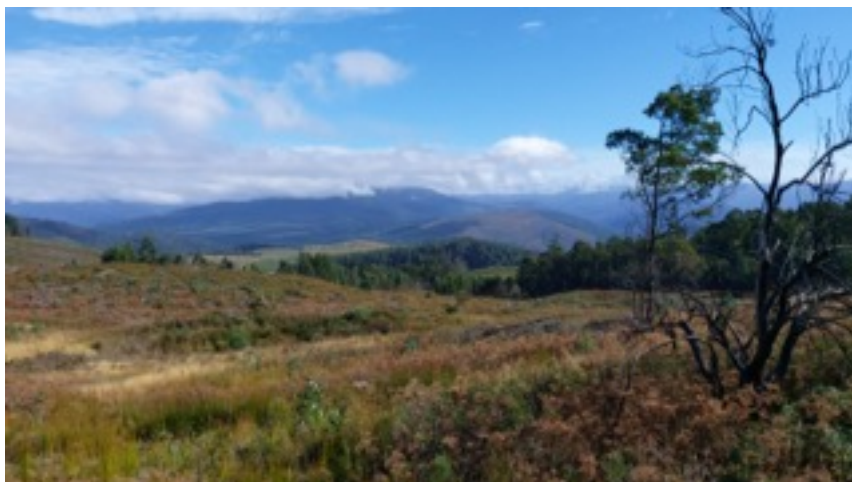
Descending the Power Easement



Descending the Power Easement

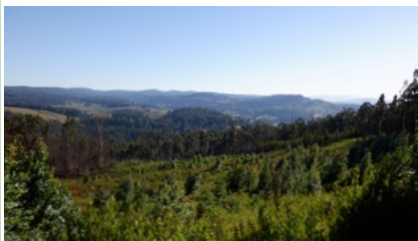








Cambridge House farewell



Sign says no vehicular access – didn't stop a ute a few moments later



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 30

### Geeveston to Esperance River (27+km)

3<sup>rd</sup> April 2021. 'Long day,' I said, sitting next to Andrew on the rocks on the edge of the Esperance River. 'Too long,' he replied, which was milder than the response at mileage 17.9 where the first comment was 'I've had enough,'...and the second was 'I hate this part of the job.' (Meaning 'walking beyond his comfortable limit')!

Today's diversion toward Esperance River became a bit of a guessing game as we had seen no markers for this section of the Trail. We were, admittedly officially on the 'alternate track'; the marker that had been at John Street had been removed and we had to guess the directions according to the Guide notes. We got the first guess right (where Andrew had made his declaration) - but the next one wrong. Based on the required mileage, I had mis-timed our ascent and turned left at the next turn. It turned out we walked into a logging coup so we had now added to the exceptionally long day, having to retrace our steps to the last turn. At this time there was no gpx file supplied for this detour, we had no schematic in the Guide, *Alltrails* wasn't showing me much, and *whereis.com* had us in the middle of a green patch, nowhere near a road. It was Google maps

that came to our rescue with the skerrick of reception we had, probably only available because the trees had been cut down. The details however were only partially correct!

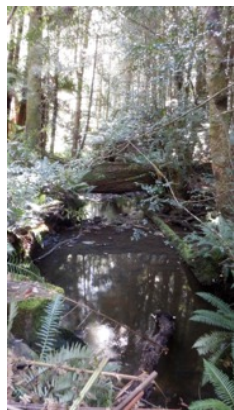
We found our way back to the proper turnoff into Rutherford Road, and a *very obvious* trail marker, but that was the last one. We were tired and getting toward exhausted, and as a result I was losing my ability to concentrate. I nearly stepped on two snakes... one 'tiger' and one 'white lipped' and that gave us a bit of a fright. The road we were on was lovely and there was a lovely view at the end of it, coming to the intersection with Parea Road. But I wasn't taking much notice; we were conscious of the time and the light, and our sore and tired feet. By the time we got to the closed-off campground at Esperance River our feet were killing us, and we had run out of water. We were very happy to stop.

The tent went up at 1715 but we didn't immediately put our gear in it. I wanted to get to the river and sit and enjoy it, at least for a few minutes before it started to get dark. We did soak our feet in the





First snake of the day – and not one I nearly stepped on!



cold and refreshing water, but the water was so exceptionally cold that our feet didn't stay in long. The wind had been excessively strong when we turned up (to the point, I discovered later, of blowing away my peg bag) and didn't die down much overnight. We had used the picnic shelter to dissipate some of the wind to have our dinner. We went to bed at dusk.

But it wasn't just at the end of the day that we had come across frustrating and disconcerting situations.

The first frustration of the day was when we thought we had only travelled 2 kilometers instead of the 4.9 that I had calculated in the notebook, and I couldn't get my brain to work to reconcile this. The Second frustration' was being charged by a 'prime porker' (or 'big fat bit of bacon' whichever description is appropriate at the time of reference). Admittedly the pig may have only wanted to be friendly – indeed there had been two small pigs in a pen adjacent the road around fifteen minutes beforehand,

who had run toward us squealing as we passed. This pig however was on its own, in the vegetation on the verge of a eucalypt plantation, and was originally, when Andrew spotted it, facing the road we were on as we walked past. It wasn't quite razorback – or a wild boar, but having eased our way past where it was staring at us, I thought we had left it behind. A couple of minutes later however something made me turn around. Andrew was ahead of me and out of danger however I now had a large, three to four feet high, and three feet wide animal charging at me. I admit I've never studied up on what to do with a charging pig. The mind however uses what information it has, and in a fraction of a second I had recalled the strategy for a charging bull; put your arms out – look as wide as possible. This I did. Of course I had the walking sticks as well so suddenly I was, in theory hopefully in the eyes of the pig, a very wide animal. It worked. The charge stopped. I inched backward up the hill. Eventually the animal gave up and went back to hiding in the vegetation along the side of the road.

It was a hard day with lots of up and down,





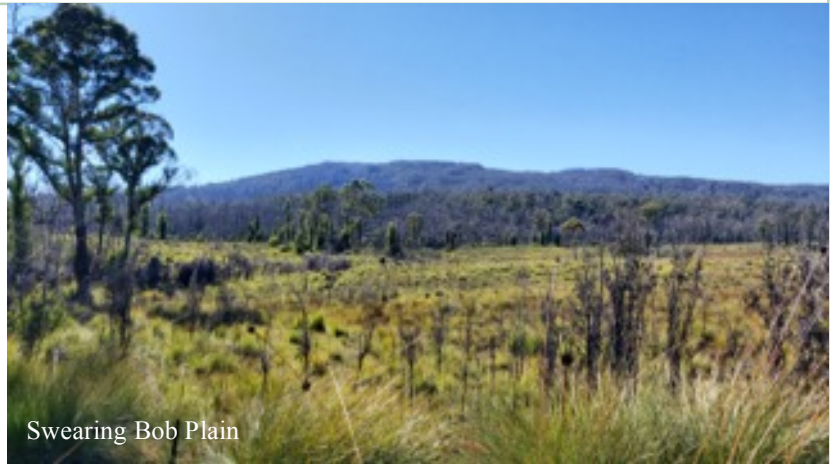
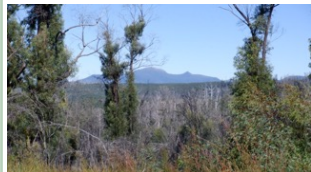
Swearing Bob Plain



Swearing Bob Plain



Swearing Bob Plain

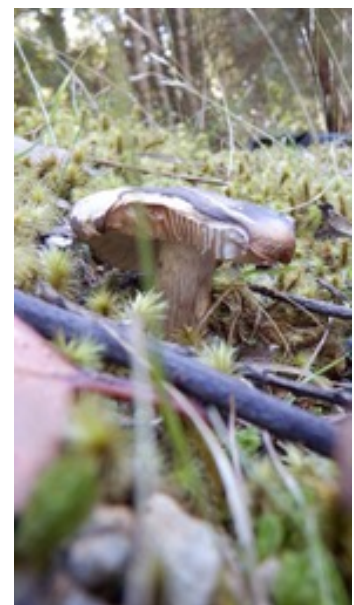


Swearing Bob Plain

and admittedly we were still trying to recover from the hard up and down of the day before. It was also a hot day and we had to manage our water intake carefully. We got a glimpse of the sea from a high point around 1130. I didn't take a photo but should have – it was the last we were to see of it today.

Despite several instances of wide sweeping views today I was most delighted when we came across Swearing Bob Plain. This landscape was just so different to much that we had seen before, and the openness welcoming. Apparently we had gone past another plain on the White Timber Trail, but there had been a collar of thick young trees blocking it from the road (and our view) and I'd been disappointed I missed it. Here the colours were lovely; the vegetation was dominated by knobby club rush and other grasses and sedges, as well as small heathy species.

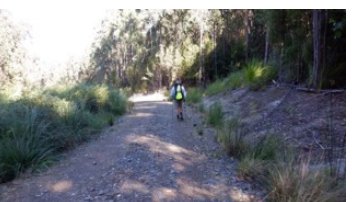
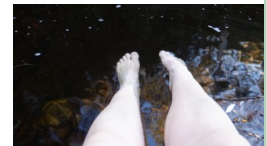
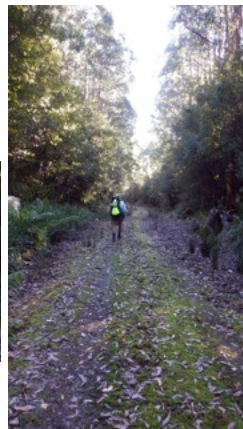
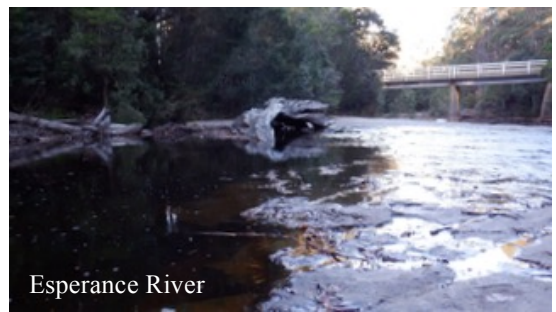
Taking the alternate track to Esperence River was designed to save us around five kilometers walking today, even though the estimated distance was way past our preference. With the muddle with directions I think we probably ended up walking the same amount as if we'd travelled straight to Dover. It was a pity we were too tired to appreciate the latter part of the day.



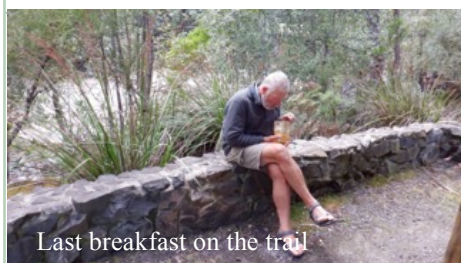




And I would have liked to have spent more time at the River in the afternoon.







Last breakfast on the trail



## Tasmanian Trail – Day 31

### The final steps: Esperance River to Dover (16km)

4th April 2021. We got up at the latish time of 0800. And we didn't leave until 1015! It was still windy this morning and we decanted our gear into the 'shelter' to make it easier to load our packs. We hadn't filtered any water for our bladders yesterday so we filtered it this morning - and this took up some time. Collecting the tent to pack it up was an exercise in rocking it from side to side with the doors open; some of the (European) wasps that had bugged us yesterday evening had made their way this morning in though the open doors when we were unloading our gear. We couldn't pack it up until they'd gone!

The last 16 or so kilometers of the Tasmanian Trail was pleasant enough; all on roads, through State Forest of reasonable age, a few areas of growing plantation (with a view above them), and only one cleared logging coup. There were also a few areas that may have been too difficult to log and still have magnificent tall ferns, which provided us with cool and shaded roads. We stopped for a lunch break and a local stopped their car to see if we were okay! There were no

signs here warning of penalties for dumping rubbish, but there were several patches of dumped rubbish non-the-less, including one washing machine that had clearly been dumped down the side of one road, and was now suspended in the trees above the main link track! We saw the blue of the ocean at 1350. (We discovered later daylight savings had ended and we had gained an hour). I am not sure what Andrew was thinking but clearly that sight signaled the end of our walk. We were so close to the end. Originally we were thinking about visiting the Dover Sailing Regatta in the afternoon but having seen no boats on the water as we came into town (it was extremely windy), we decided to head straight to our accommodation instead.

I had been in contact with our Bed & Breakfast establishment for the night and we were welcomed to 'Ashdowns of Dover' by a round of applause. I admit I burst into tears. The host didn't really care that we were smelly, after all he knew what we'd been up to, and welcomed us to *Ashdowns* with a cup of peppermint tea and coffee,





and scones (including gluten free ones for me) with cream and homemade jam. After an hour of chat with the host we enjoyed a well-earned shower before relaxing on the bed. Yes, a congratulatory bottle of champagne was consumed. And yes, we had something to eat with it – but the only thing

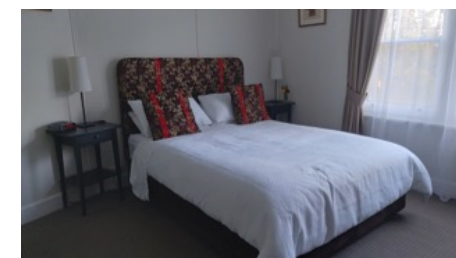
immediately available in the room at the time was a few bars of chocolate, which may have been just as well - we needed the extra energy to convince our feet to get us to an early dinner at the RSL.

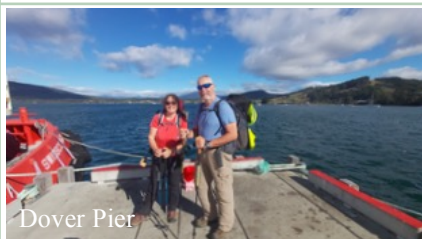


Official end of the Tasmanian Trail



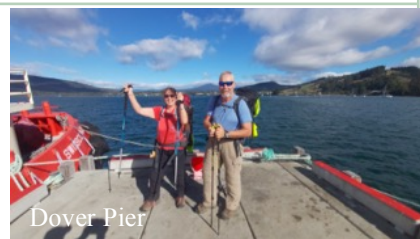
Official end of the Tasmanian Trail





Dover Pier

## Tasmanian Trail Our official Finish!



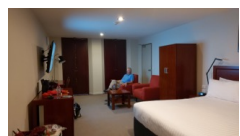
Dover Pier



Dover Pier



Waiting for the bus



Back in Hobart

5<sup>th</sup> April 2021. Having ticked off the Tasmanian Trail to its official end point yesterday, the only thing left today was to tick it off to our end point; the end of the Dover pier. So, after a lovely breakfast at *Ashdowns of Dover* we loaded up our gear into our packs, again, put them on our backs, again, and walked down to the water's edge. To get that final shot we commandeered a fishing tourist to be our photographer. Record done, we now had some time to fill in. Accommodation establishments usually chuck you out at 1000. The bus wasn't due until around 1300. We had some time to wait. So we detoured via a previous accommodation provider to say hello, and then to the Top Shop for an early lunch. It was then just a matter of waiting for the bus. We'd seen Kevin of Tasmanian Wilderness Experiences pass on his way to his Cockle Creek pick up, so we knew if the bus didn't turn up then we could call and get a ride. However public transport seems to be pretty efficient in Tasmania on public holidays and we loaded ourselves in when the bus turned up on time. The bus trip back to Hobart was pleasant, the last waddle from the bus stop to the hotel a final hurrah, and the evening was spent relaxing in front of the Television.